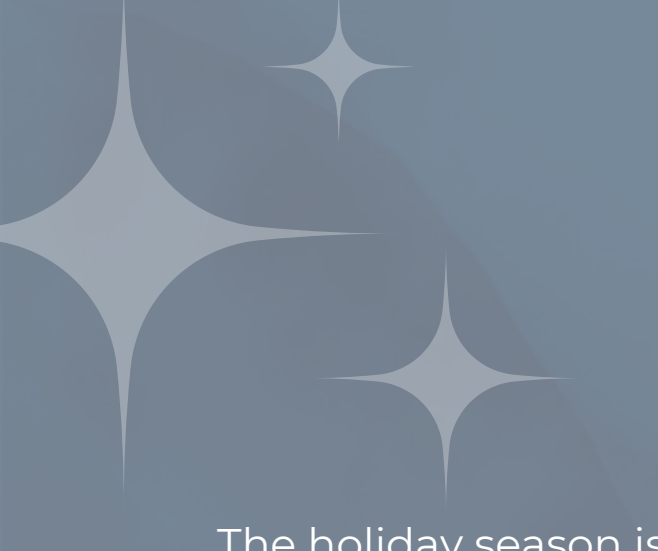




holly jolly
chaos

supporting your kids, your family, and
yourself during the holiday season

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it's the most wonderful time of the year?

The holiday season is filled with joy and beauty. Most people are looking forward to time off of work and school. We love to watch our children's faces light up when they open a gift we put so much thought into.

It's also a struggle for many folks. We may experience loneliness, anxiety, complex grief, sadness, and other feelings that might make us feel like we aren't fitting in with the expectations of the season.

This is also true for our children. Here are some tips to manage your mood, as well as support your children during this season.

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1. reduce your expectations.

We all feel the pressure to make incredible memories for our children: snowball fights, opening incredible gifts, Christmas lights, holiday parties...

explore why this is important to you.

Remember: beautiful memories happen in the small moments, too. Watching a movie in front of the fire as a family, enlisting your children in "playing Santa" for each other and your partner, and sipping hot cocoa while doing puzzles are all just as pleasant to remember--and might be less stressful for everyone involved.

2. make space and time for yourself.

So many complicated emotions can arise during this season. We may feel worried about money. Perhaps we're grieving loved ones. It's also normal to feel overwhelmed by the changes in routine (and, yes, too much family time is something that can be stressful for you, too!)

take time each day to sit quietly and read a book, work on a puzzle, meditate, or be outside alone.



3. give your children grace.

Just like we are affected by changes in routine and exciting moments, our children may experience overwhelming emotions when we think they should be joyful. It's completely normal for children to cry, be defiant, shut down, or seem "ungrateful."

regulate your own emotions through self-care strategies so you can be a safe space for their big feelings (and don't take them personally).

4. no, really. it's not personal.



De-personalizing your children's behavior is the most crucial step. A grouchy child is still an appreciative, loving, grateful child. Consider the times you have felt overwhelmed: did it mean you didn't feel grateful or loving? Or did it mean you were just plain stretched too thin?

put yourself in their shoes. give them the same empathy you've needed in situations where you're struggling.

5. remember: they take their cues from you.

Our facial expressions, tone, body language, and overall demeanor are influential over our children's moods. Sometimes when we feel pressured to make sure everyone is having a good time, we become tense. Our pitch or tone might give off our anxiety, signaling our children that all is not well. On the flip side, if they see us feeling calm and genuinely enjoying an activity, their mood is more likely to reflect that.

use calming strategies like deep breaths to regulate yourself (and let them see you).



need more support
throughout the holidays
and beyond?

we're here.

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