

Keeping Peace with Family

Here are some ideas for keeping the holidays less stressful and more merry and bright: • Be realistic with the children. Discuss holiday expectations in advance. Involve the youngsters in what to expect and what they can do to participate in the holidays. • Acknowledge that tension



often increases during the holidays. Suggest ways for family members to relax or manage anger and stress.

• If children will be spending time with two sets of parents, talk about how it will be managed. Consider the transition time for children as they mentally and/or physically move "back and forth" between families. Give the children some time to adjust. • Be in control of how you act. Treat family members with kindness and respect. • Be realistic with your expectations for the holidays.

Spending Time with Your Family

It's difficult enough for families to find time to spend with each other any time of the year, but the holidays can be especially challenging. There's good news! Simple activities can become fun ways to be together. Here are just a few ideas: • Have a cookie baking day. Enjoy some of the cookies while you work, and freeze the rest for the holidays. • Make a family tree with photographs or drawings of family members. • Designate one afternoon a week for a family walk. You might explore nearby hiking trails, a community park, or your own neighborhood. • Go caroling as a family. Call on neighbors, friends, or shut-ins. • Prepare a special recipe that has been handed down through the generations. • Set aside an evening to watch holiday TV specials together. Make some popcorn and enjoy shows like *Frosty the Snowman*, *A Christmas Carol*, and *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*.

If You'll Be Gone for the Holidays

If you'll be away for the holidays, remember these precautions:

- ◆ Leave a light or two set on timers so that they come on at different times during the day.
- ◆ Make sure that valuables can't be seen from the outside.
- ◆ Turn down the volume on your telephone and answering machine so it won't be heard.
- ◆ Arrange to have the newspapers and mail temporarily stopped.

Stay Safe While Shopping

• Shop with a friend or family member. • Avoid carrying large amounts of cash and never flash your money around. • Pay attention to the layout of the shopping center. Note the exits and the security office. • Place all purchases out of sight in your vehicle. • Be cautious of suspicious people or vehicles in the parking lot. • Carry purses with the flap toward your body. • Avoid carrying too many packages at one time.



Creating New Holiday Traditions

The holidays may be difficult to face after a personal loss such as a death or divorce. But it can be a time of reinventing yourself and your holidays. Here are several tips: • If you can't be with family members, reach out to friends and neighbors. • Find a way to pamper yourself during the holidays. • If you have children, be creative. Schedule a new and enjoyable activity that's different from what you've done in the past.

Prevent Fireplace Dangers

Protect your family with these fireplace safety tips:

- Have chimneys inspected annually and cleaned as necessary.
- Keep the top of chimneys clear of tree limbs or debris.
- Install a chimney cap to keep debris and animals out of the chimney.
- Always open the damper before lighting the fire and keep it open until the ashes are cool.
- Never use gasoline, charcoal lighter, or other fuels to light or relight a fire.
- Don't burn trash or gift wrap in the fireplace.
- Read the instructions on artificial logs and follow them carefully.
- Avoid overloading the fireplace.
- Always use a screen around the fireplace to keep sparks from flying out and to protect children and adults from accidental clothing ignition.
- Warn children about the danger of fire.
- Keep flammable materials such as carpets, pillows, furniture or papers away from the fireplace area.
- Make sure the fire is completely extinguished before going to bed or leaving the house.



For more information, visit the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission at www.cpsc.gov.