



Mimi Peterson, MD Scott Radomsky, MD Amy Montgomery, MD Alina Boelman, MD
Sandy Herron, MD Amelia K. Decker, MD Jennifer Moher, MD Brent Watkins, MD
7507 East Tanque Verde Road, Tucson, AZ 85715 Phone 520-722-2585 Fax 520-722-1097
WWW.TANQUEVERDEPEDS.COM

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Holiday Mental Health Survival Guide

Holidays can be a great and exciting time, but can also be lonely, anxiety provoking, destabilizing, and upsetting.

When thinking about you child and how to approach upcoming invites, traditions, events, and parties, consider what situations might magnify your child's lagging emotional skills rather than using their strengths.

- Does an unpredictable bedtime lead to grumpiness in the mornings?
- Does the excitement of extra activities make it hard to focus on school work?
- Does forced hugs with relatives feel like too much touch?
- Does the extra noise and chaos of cousins and visitors create a sensory overload?

If we think in advance, we can create buffers to help with the added end of year stress.

- Maybe we allow a late bedtime to watch a Christmas movie on a Friday evening, but stick to our normal bedtime on Christmas Eve to allow a smooth Christmas morning.
- Can the children play dreidel on the porch outside of the parents loud conversations?
- Can you explain to relatives beforehand that your child gets to choose when and who to hug and you will not be forcing them to give affection?
- Can you arm your child with a phrase that puts them in charge of their body ("I am glad to see you, but I don't feel comfortable with a hug right now" "I would prefer an air high five instead" "Please don't give me kisses, it makes me feel uncomfortable")?
- Is there a way to make a visual schedule which creates work blocks and fun blocks into you schedule so that your child knows they won't miss out on a fun activity?

Involving your child in the process of creating these buffers will help you both understand the true issue at hand and make sure that you are both invested in the outcome. While this takes extra time and might be uncomfortable at first, remember that your child is learning the tools and techniques in these discussions that will help turn their lagging skills into their strengths!

Happy and Safe Holidays from your Mental Health Team at Tanque Verde Peds!