



Prescription for a Holiday Break



1. **PLAY, PLAY, PLAY.** Remember your “presence” and focused attention is the greatest present you can give your children. Years from now, they won’t remember the gifts, but they WILL remember your times together. Ironically, this is the time of year when parents are the most preoccupied with preparations or involved with social activities outside the home.

2. Remember, when you are interacting together - be it playing a game, wrapping presents, cooking, doing laundry, or cleaning up - **use your persistence, social, and emotion coaching methods.** For example, “*You are really helping just like a team. We are all working together. I feel the joy of holiday time.*”

3. **Keep looking for opportunities to praise,** notice any positive child behaviors and label them with your approving words. Having child visitors? Praise any cooperative, polite, and friendly behaviors your child shows to other children (and adults count too!).

4. Consider using those holiday goodies or fun stickers as **spontaneous rewards** for those positive behaviors you want to see more of. Use sparingly!

5. **Give yourself a break.** Take Time Out for yourself - exercise, meet a friend for lunch, take a long bath, listen to some music, have a chat with your buddy - do something fun!

6. **UNPLUG THE CHRISTMAS TREE!!! (Metaphorically!)** Reduce your expectations for yourself, your family, your in-laws and your children. Don’t expect “best company behavior.” Remember most child are “wound up” at this time of year. Most parents get themselves too stressed! Schedules may be less predictable. Expect relapses in your child and yourself - accept mistakes and try again.

Most of all, keep it simple and as low key as possible!



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