

REDUCING HOLIDAY STRESS FOR TEENS

We often hear about the stress of the holidays. Think about the added pressure it can place on our children – especially teenagers –in addition to the everyday stress they feel already. A young teen writes:

“Probably less than half of all my friends have a father who lives at home. And less than half of those have a father who is active in their lives. There are many girls I know have been abused by family members. I have a friend who is currently a full-blown, self-admitted alcoholic. He can’t go until 3:00 in the afternoon unless he’s had a drink. I hear of parties where “cool” parents take shots with their kids and their friends. I know dads who have bought their sons and daughters bongos for their birthdays. At one point last year, there were three girls in just one of my classes who were pregnant. One of them had a miscarriage and had to go to therapy for months. She attempted to get pregnant and had to go to therapy for months. She attempted to get pregnant again during her sophomore year. I get so lonely sometimes, I feel like I’m lost in an ocean of hopelessness. We need to do something. We need help.”

To Think About...

Dads, I believe we can help neutralize that stress and pressure, and the time for action is now. Our schools and culture are becoming increasingly hostile. Witness the harassing and bullying behavior we read about in the news and watch on TV. This is a clear message for dads to use their presence and mood in a positive way this holiday.

Peace, comfort and attentive listening and three significant gifts you can give your child over the holidays. Be proactive and wrap your arms and ears around your child’s world. Take this break to learn more about his or her friends. Ask thoughtful questions. Figure out specific ways you can support him or her. My hope is that, like modern-day wise men, we can give our children gifts that are meaningful – peace, comfort, and attentiveness.

More important, don’t place unrealistic expectations on the holiday season. Things in a family life don’t change with the magic of the holiday; unresolved family issues just don’t go away. Dads, work hard as the family leader, the dad, in setting aside past hostile issues or use this time to work peacefully and tenderly into a new home environment where peace can be a reality. This will possibly take new fathering skills in being kind, thoughtful, and considerate and becoming a home peacemaker. If you are part of the problem, pray for a new spirit and heart to reconcile the hearts of your family. Consider what is important in life and decide if having a family of love and peace is worth the pain and anger of a dysfunctional home.

Action Points for Committed Dads

- 1. Ask your children if anyone has been harassing them or if they have been insensitive to a classmate. Is there anyone who needs the friendship and support?**
- 2. Think of ways you can give some of those intangible gifts—peace, comfort, and attentiveness—to each of your children.**
- 3. If you have young adult children coming home for Christmas, plan ahead and make sure you have a big hug and something good to eat ready when they arrive. Tell them how much they were missed.**
- 4. Pull out the board games and puzzles for you and your children during the upcoming extended holiday.**

In all things, listen, listen and love, love.