

Managing the holiday season during the cost-of-living crisis

As the holiday season approaches, it can bring feelings of joy, excitement, and happiness, but also stress, worry and often sadness against the backdrop of the cost of living crisis. The BPS's Division of Educational and Child Psychology (DECP) has offered its advice for parents on how to manage the holiday season and their children's expectations.

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By [Division of Educational and Child Psychology](#)

This year, the cost of living crisis promises to make the holiday season even more challenging, particularly when it comes to managing children's expectations around gifts and celebrations. Families might be having to cut back not just on presents and gifts, but on visiting family and friends and it may not feel the same as previous years. This can cause anxiety and stress for both parents and children.

It may be helpful to prepare children in advance that the festive season may be different this year. For example, let children know that there may not be as many presents, but that the holidays will still be a special occasion for everybody.

Explain that the most important part of the festive season is spending time with family and friends. When they look back, children's memories of the happy experiences of the time spent with loved ones will be far more important to them than the number of presents, they receive.

In this vein, there may be opportunities to spend time with family and friends which create happy memories and experiences and which cost little such as going for a walk, visiting lights, watching a movie on television or playing games, going to a carol service or free musical performance or borrowing books from the library. Both children and adults may also enjoy creative activities including making things, drawing and writing stories and poems.

Acts of kindness in the community can also provide a sense of purpose. If children become upset because things are not as they expect and show big

emotions a good approach to use is emotion coaching. This is an approach that acknowledges how the child may be feeling while naming the emotion and showing empathy before looking to problem-solve. This might be discussing an activity that may support them feeling calmer and less upset or simply having a hug!

Finally, as parents and carers, do make sure you also take care of yourselves. Take part in activities that you also enjoy, and which promote your emotional wellbeing. Connect with yourself and what is around you and if you can use the support of friends and family.

By Abigail Wright, Alison Greenwood, Denise Miller and Cynthia Pinto, members of the DECP.