Stress Less, Enjoy More

When the Holidays are mentioned, what is the very first thing that comes to mind? For many it’s time with family, a certain meal, and thoughts on how to make the Holidays ‘especially special’ for our children, no matter if they’re young or grown. Yet, we as parents often stress about making sure our children get the latest and greatest items on their list. Even the lists we see on T.V. or the internet, like the “Top 10 Toys of 2019” suggest the latest and greatest, most expensive items are a must. The Holidays are becoming more and more stressful, fast-paced, and expensive.

Let’s pause and reflect for a minute on what matters most. From the very young to those who are grown, is it the latest and greatest toy we opened years ago that we remember for years to come? Or is it the traditions, the experiences we create for our children; the joy that connection brings us as their caregivers? What do you work to re-create for your children from your childhood... what remains special to you even now?

From my experience, it’s the traditions and genuine connection between the child and the adult that matter most.

Have you ever attempted to change an annual tradition to another one, exchanged a ham for pizza? Attempted to buy cookies rather than make homemade cookies? When we make these shifts, although small thinking it won’t make a difference, we most definitely hear about it. Often we hear “that’s good, but not as good as_______(fill in the blank)”. More times than not, it’s not only the traditions that make the Holiday, it’s the people and the true connection.

What if all of our focus this Holiday season was towards making experiences and true connection, placing technology and to-dos aside? If we focus on the true joys and bringing to life what we remember as special to our children?

Here are some quick tips to shift from a ‘fast-track’ Holiday to an’ intentional’ Holiday:

1. **Prioritize:** What matters the most to your family? Is it the most options on the table or is it creating a simpler meal, with favorite items in mind. Think more time to enjoy the meal together rather than cooking all day! Focus on the traditions that matter most to your family, and omit those you feel you have to do but they don’t bring joy and are really not important to you. Create new traditions and routines with input from the littlest ones in the family.

2. **Perfection to Meaningful:** We could stress about having all things ‘just right’ for the Holidays or, we could focus on the experiences more than the product. It’s more about the time and connection while making a cookie than making 10 different types of cookies, including your kiddos in frosting and decorating (finger and spoon licking included)! When decorating, don’t stress about having all of your decorations up, focus on those that bring memories to mind, such as hand-made pictures and ornaments. Art created by little hands and displayed brings smiles and pride from those who made it.

3. **Remain Grateful:** Surrounding ourselves with family and friends, the time we have with all is so precious. Focus on gratefulness, take time to enjoy. Spread the joy and gratitude to each other and others around you, pay it forward and share the feeling of gratitude with others. Have your children create a list of what they are grateful for.
4. **Simplify Gifts, Focus on Experiences:** Reducing the number of gifts can be a good start. Communicate with your family that we are focusing more on fun and time together than gifts, possibly doing a fun gift exchange rather than buying a large number of gifts. Cards, board games, and a movie night in PJs are great traditions that can fill the void of gift giving. When buying gifts, keeping in mind the experience it will bring for years to come and the meaning the gift will bring. A saying that can be helpful with focus of gift buying in mind, “something they want, something they need, something they can do or read”.

5. **Make the time to enjoy as adults!** Planning is important, prioritizing what matters most, however to-do lists can fill all of our time rather than spending time where it matters most…with our kids, making memories.

Happy Holidays!

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