

Holiday Blues: Suggestions for Parents

If your child has experienced any of the following events, they may be at risk for something called the Holiday Blues. Sadness is the most obvious sign of the holiday blues. But children also show the blues by withdrawing from their family, being irritable, uncooperative, aggressive and also verbally nasty. Helpful suggestions to assist your child with these difficult events are provided. Your school Guidance Counselor, TRUST Specialist, School Social Worker and School Psychologist are also available to assist upon your request.

DEATH IN THE FAMILY

The trauma of losing a loved one is softened when children are surrounded by relatives during the holiday season. Family get-togethers with relatives are a wonderful way to help children feel connected and loved. Expect tears and words of missing the family member who has died. When tears surface over the loss, be supportive by expressing similar feelings and cry together. There is relief when members of a family experience their grief together.

- Ask the children what they think mom or dad or the grandparent that they have lost would want them to do during this first holiday season without them and then do it.
- Consider putting some time aside to visit the cemetery for prayers and flowers.
- Put together a special album of photos to celebrate the life of the family member who has died. At an appropriate time look over the photos and recall the fun times of the past and talk of the person who everyone misses.

DIVORCE

- Work out a schedule prior to the Holidays for sharing the children with each parent; so children know they will be with both parents and spared the experience of their parents arguing over them.
- Refrain from quarreling in front of the children.
- Refrain from saying disparaging things to the children about the other parent.
- Each parent should plan a fun activity to help the children realize that they are still part of a family and there is now mom's house and dad's house.

LOSS OF INCOME

There is an old saying that. "the best things in life are free." Parents should remember this saying and look in the newspaper for all sorts of special events for the holiday that the family can enjoy together FREE or at a small cost.

- Encourage everyone to make gifts this year.
- Encourage relatives who normally give gifts, to give your child the one special gift they are wishing for.
- Get together with another family in the same financial situation and make plans for creating fun.
- Consider finding a way to give to a family or a charity that is less fortunate than your family.
- Involve the family in making cookies, decorations and preparing the Holiday meals.

PARENTS IN THE MILITARY

Children whose parents are part of the armed services are especially affected during the holiday season.

- Parents in the military can rely on relatives who are caring for the children to buy a special gift for their child so she/he will know it came from mom or dad.
- E-mails and video clips can help children to know that their mom or dad is safe and okay and that next Christmas the family will be together.
- Tape recorded messages or tape recorded bedtime stories are a good way for children to feel connected to their mom or dad.

The holiday blues can be very real for children, but with a little bit of thought and preparation, the holiday season can still be special for children who have recently experienced a sad event.