



Lessen the Stressin'

The holidays are a very exciting time for kids but they can also be a very stressful time for parents - entertaining kids who are out of school, shopping, preparing meals, making plans, etc.

An easy way to Lessen the Stressin' is to set expectations early. By taking 10 minutes to brainstorm the challenges that lie ahead, you can set expectations with your kids so they know exactly what you need from them. The key is to think ahead before you get into a situation where your kids are driving you bonkers!

Here are some examples:

You are going to a relative's house where your child will likely receive a gift he/she does not enjoy.

Before leaving or while in the car say: Just so you know, Aunt Jesse will probably give you a gift while we are here. This is extremely nice of Aunt Jessie. She loves you very much. I know she can sometimes buy things you are not into, but I expect you to:

- Smile when you open the package
- Say "thank you" to Aunt Jessie like you mean it (Practice if you have to)
- Give Aunt Jessie a nice big hug
- Avoid making any faces that show you do not like the gift. This will hurt Aunt Jessie's feelings and we don't want to do that

The kids are off from school and you need to bake cookies for a holiday party.

In the morning when the kids wake up, say: Today can be a lot of fun, but I need to bake cookies from 2:00-3:30pm. During this time, I expect you to:

- Have something fun picked out to do on your own, Please pick three things so you don't run out of stuff to do (Brainstorm with them)
- Avoid complaining to me that you are bored
- Have a snack and drink beforehand so you don't need to ask me
- Stay out of the kitchen because it will be very messy

-Since the kids are out of school, they are going to want to stay up late and may be rowdy with excitement when it's time to actually go to bed.

At dinner say: I know there is no school tomorrow so we all get to stay up late! We are going to make popcorn and play two board games. After the games, you can

play in your room for 15 minutes. This is going to be a lot of fun, but because we are going to have so much fun, when it is time for bed I expect you to:

- Brush your teeth without complaining the very first time I ask
- Put your pajamas on the very first time I ask
- Turn off your light the very first time I ask
- Understand that we have already had a snack and that bedtime is not the time to ask for another
- Show me that you are thankful by staying in your bed and trying to go to sleep as quickly as possible