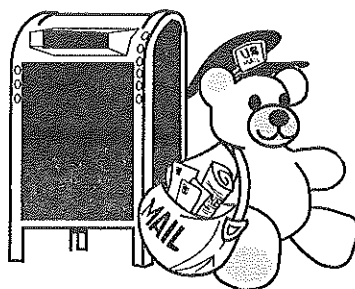


## THE TEDDY



## BEAR POST

A NEWSLETTER FOR PARENTS OF PRESCHOOLERS

## Keeping Kids Calm During the Holidays

**W**ith all the special activities and hectic preparations during the holidays, extra demands are put on our time and energy as parents. In our rush, we sometimes forget that the anticipation, excitement, and changes in daily routine can cause emotional upheaval and stress for our children as well. This is the time of year to think about which activities are the most meaningful to your family and which can be simplified.

Here are a few ideas on how to keep your holidays as happy and calm as possible:

- **Pay Attention to Appropriate Behavior** - When you are under stress, it is very easy to get upset by your child's behavior. Try to notice the good things your child is doing and make a positive comment immediately. For example, if you are wrapping gifts and your child waits patiently for you to finish, you might say, "I know it was hard for you to wait until I finished. Thank you for waiting quietly. Now let's read that story."
- **Ignore Minor Misbehavior** - When children get tired, hungry, sick, or overly excited they often whine, cry, or express their feelings through a temper tantrum. Try not to overreact, especially if you are also tired, hungry, and stressed. Instead, at the first sign of a potential "meltdown," take a moment to rest.
- **Rehearse** - During the holiday season, children are sometimes exposed to new experiences, places, or activities that may make them uncomfortable. To help them feel at ease, talk beforehand about where you are going and what is going to happen when you get there. Let them ask questions and do your best to understand what your child is asking. For example, if you are going to visit Santa, let your child know what Santa will look like, what he will be doing, and that you will be nearby. Agree to join them by posing in the photo together if your child cries or is hesitant. Make sure to have a plan. Take your child early so he can watch other children sit with Santa and reassure him that he may leave at any time or that he may just watch for this



visit. Never tease or shame your child for being timid.

It may take a few years for preschoolers to become comfortable with large "pretend" characters.

- **Choice** - Children as well as adults respond better when given choices. With young children, limit these to two or three simple choices so they will be less overwhelmed.

For example, if you go to get a treat after a shopping trip, let your child choose between stickers, erasers, or markers. Or offer a choice of activities, "Would you like to go to the pet store, the book store, or to the park?"

- **Transitions** - Moving from one activity to another can cause difficulty for preschoolers even when it is something your child is excited about. Give your child advance notice of what is going to happen next whenever possible. Also give your child advance notice to prepare for a change in activity. For example, about five minutes before you need to change an activity, you might say, "We will need to stop playing in a little while because we are going to visit Grandma." This gives your child a chance to finish what he's doing and prepare himself for the next activity. Remember that young children have a poor understanding of time and should not be expected to move onto the next activity without your help.
- **Basic Family Routines** - During the holidays it is more important than ever to keep to routines such as naptime, mealtime, and bedtime even though your schedule is hectic. Stress builds up and children get tired and cranky when they don't know what to expect. When routines are disturbed, it is natural for children to test you on other changes. For example, if your child is playing with her visiting grandmother and refuses to stop for a nap, you might say, "Even though Grandma is here and you want to play with her, it is still naptime. Maybe Grandma will read you a short story before you go to sleep." In this way, you are maintaining your child's daily routine, which gives him a sense of security during the holidays.



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## "A PARENT ASKS"

**Q: My son doesn't seem to be eating as much as he used to. I'm worried. Mealtime is always a fight. What should I do?**

**A:** A decrease in appetite is normal for toddlers and preschoolers. Many parents become concerned, but an increase in appetite usually follows a growth spurt and a decrease follows a leveling-off of growth. Children at this age are often "grazers," preferring very small meals frequently to the standard three meals a day which adults are used to. Some children are naturally picky eaters. Most children experience a decrease in appetite when they are sick or overly tired. Be careful not to fall into the habit of bribing or threatening your child to get him to eat. Here are some mealtime tips:



- 1) Remember, *what* foods your child chooses depends on the foods *you* make available and *how much* he eats is his choice. Provide healthy snacks such as fruit, veggies, and yogurt, and have regular meal and snack times. Be careful not to nag.
- 2) Big helpings can be discouraging so serve small portions. Make sure your child feels comfortable asking for "seconds." Likes and dislikes change very frequently at this age so don't overstock on an item.
- 3) Make mealtime fun - for example, it could be a time for sharing what happened during the day and for listening to each other. Keep the focus off the food itself.
- 4) Give your child and family about 30 minutes for mealtime. Then clear the table, even if your child isn't eating. Five minutes before clearing the table, calmly let your child know that the meal is almost over and that he needs to finish if he's hungry. Don't hover, nag, or bribe. Put whatever is left on his

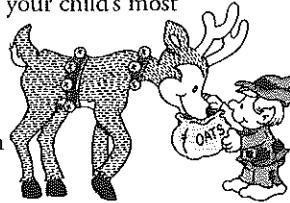
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## PARENTS WANT TO KNOW

### THE ART OF GIVING

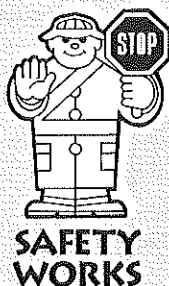
It is not too early for preschoolers to begin to understand that the holidays are about giving to others and sharing. It might be fun to start a family ritual of making homemade holiday cards or goodies to share with others at a neighborhood school or church, or to give to someone who does not have family living nearby. Let your child help with decorating and making projects to share with others. This may turn into one of your child's most cherished childhood memories and could be a lasting lesson on the importance of sharing.



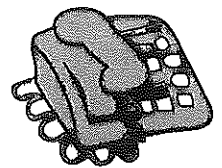
—A Parent Asks, continued

- plate on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator for him to eat later, if he gets hungry. If he doesn't eat it, clean the plate and start again the next day. Clean up quietly without a fuss. Once your child senses that there is less pressure from you, he will be more likely to eat what he needs to.
- 5) A book you might enjoy which helps to explain children's eating habits is *How To Get Your Kid To Eat...But Not Too Much* by Ellyn Satter. She is also the author of *Child of Mine: Feeding With Love and Good Sense*.

For further information on child development, call: **The Parent Line** 526-1222; Neighbor Islands call toll free 1-800-816-1222. M-F 8:00am-6:00pm, Sat 9:00am-1:00pm.



Keep matches and lighters in a secure place and out of the reach of little hands. Remember, children are curious and may think they are toys. Be sure that an adult is always watching the younger children while you operate a grill or when lighting fireworks, candles, etc. Preschoolers are fascinated by fire and often do not understand the danger.



### Hawaii Families As

**Allies** - If your child seems emotionally or behaviorally different, their Warm Line can help! Monday through Friday 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Call 487-3845 or toll-free 1-866-361-8825 and a parent partner will assist you with emotional support and technical assistance.

**H-KISS** Information line for parents of children birth to three years of age who have questions about developmental delays. Monday - Friday 8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. O'ahu: 594-0066 Neighbor Islands: toll-free 1-800-235-5477



### SUGGESTED HOLIDAY READING

Some excellent holiday books available at the State Libraries include:

- *Polar Express* by: Chris Van Allsburg
- *The Busy Little Squirrel* by: Nancy Tafuri
- *Winter Is The Warmest Season* by: Lauren Stringer
- *I've Seen Santa* by: David Bedford
- *I Have A Little Droidel* by: Maxie Baum
- *New Clothes For New Year's Day* by: Hyun-Joo Bae

Note: Please check with your local library for a schedule of preschool story times or special programs for the holidays.

