



Happy Holidays

5 Ways for Coping with Holiday Stress

The holidays can be a joyous but stressful time of the year, especially for teachers. “Stress”, a term, originating from the engineering field, is defined as the amount of pressure that can be placed on a structure before it collapses. Therefore, before you collapse, here are a few strategies to preventing your own holiday collapse.

- 1) Personal expectations and keeping up traditions: Whether it’s sending out the perfect holiday card or covering your house with lights and décor, a lot of fun traditions can turn into stressful personal expectations this time of year **Suggestion:** *Make a list of the typical expectations you set for yourself over the holidays. Draw a line through half of them and schedule a massage or something fun and de-stressing.*
- 2) Poor nutrition: From all of holiday parties and excess amounts of sugars, you may be left feeling lethargic and irritable. **Suggestion:** *Keep a bag of almonds or carrots for breaks. If nothing else, double down on your water intake or go for energizing walks.*
- 3) Money: Finances take a big hit during the holidays. **Suggestion:** *Set a budget and stick to it! Don’t be tempted to over purchase. Limit your time in stores and to the list!*

For more information visit <https://www.teachforamerica.org/teacherpop/5-ways-teachers-cope-holiday-stress>



Enhancing and Practicing Executive Function Skills with Children

Executive functions are a set of thinking processes located in the brain that are necessary for controlling your actions as well as holding memory.

We are not born with executive function skills, instead we are born with the potential to develop these skills. Our set of skills are shaped by our experiences and are built through engagement in meaningful social interactions and enjoyable activities that draw on one's ability to self-regulate at increasingly demanding levels.

As children develop these capacities, they need practice, practice, practice. Adults, much like teachers play a vital role in supporting their development by first helping children complete challenging tasks, and then by gradually stepping back to let children independently manage the process and learn from their mistakes.

Age appropriate activities are necessary in order to strengthen various components of executive function. Some suggestions include:

6-18 Month Olds	18-36 Month Olds	3-5 Year Olds
Encourage infants to focus attention, use working memory skills, & practice basic self-control skills	Children are rapidly expanding their language skills. Language plays an important role in the development of EF/SR skills, as it helps children identify their thoughts & actions, reflect on them, & make plans that they hold in mind & use.	Executive function & self-regulation skills grow at a fast pace during this period, so it is important to adapt activities to match the skills of each child.
Infants are actively developing their core executive function & self-regulation (EF/SR) skills	Language also helps children understand increasingly complex rules- both those that regulate behavior & those that apply to simple games	Younger children need a lot of support in learning rules & structures, while older children can be more independent
Adults should attend to infant's interests and select enjoyable activities, while also allowing the infant to determine the length of playtime	If parents or teachers are fluent in other languages, using more than one language to communicate with children is encouraged	The goal is to shift children away from relying on adult regulation, so when the child seems ready, try to reduce the support you provide.
<p>Examples: <u>Lap games:</u> peek-a-boo, pat-a-cake</p> <p><u>Hiding games:</u> hide a toy/object under a cloth and encourage the infant to find it. Older infants may enjoy hiding themselves</p> <p><u>Imitation or copying games:</u> mimicking simple gestures (e.g. waving) or demonstrating ways to play w/toys</p> <p>Simple Conversations- naming aloud the things being held in one's hand or having conversations in other languages</p>	<p>Examples: <u>Active games:</u> provide new materials & opportunities to try new skills, such as throwing & catching balls, running up & down an incline, etc.</p> <p><u>Games that require inhibition:</u> Like the freeze dance or other song games that require children to start & stop, slow down, and speed up (e.g. Ring around the Rosie)</p> <p><u>Conversation & Storytelling:</u> telling stories about shared events and talking about feelings, either by helping the child label their feelings</p> <p><u>Matching/Sorting games:</u> sorting objects by size, shape, or color; simple puzzles</p> <p><u>Imaginary Play</u></p>	<p>Examples: <u>Imaginary play:</u> intentional play, children develop rules to guide their action in playing roles; allow children to make their own play props</p> <p><u>Storytelling:</u> encourage children to tell you stories and write them down to read with the child. Children can also make pictures and create their own books</p> <p><u>Movement challenges:</u> songs and games- provide opportunities for children to test themselves physically through access to materials such as climbing structures, balance beams, seesaws, etc.</p> <p>Encourage attention control through quieter activities</p> <p><u>Play music:</u> incorporating tradition song games or songs that repeat & add on (e.g. She'll Be Coming 'Round the Mountain)</p>

Cited by: The Center on the Developing Child. More information can be found at www.developingchild.harvard.edu

What are ACEs?

ACEs are serious childhood traumas that result in toxic stress that can harm a child's brain. This toxic stress may prevent children from learning, playing in a healthy and appropriate way with other children, and can result in long-term health problems. Some types of ACE's are sexual/emotional/physical abuse, neglect, racism, and homelessness. This type of trauma may include extreme stress that can then affect the child's health. ACEs can be really impactful on a child's developing brain. It can increase hormones and intensify disruptive behaviors, such as fighting. ACEs also increase the risk of other negative behaviors, such as depression, alcoholism, unintended or teen pregnancies, and suicidal thoughts that may extend into adulthood.

ACEs can Include:	Exposures to childhood ACEs can increase the risk of:
Emotional, Physical, & Sexual Abuse/ Witness a brother/sister being abused	Adolescent Pregnancy/Unintended Pregnancies
Emotional & Physical Neglect	Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse
Being Homeless	Depression
Household substance abuse	Illicit Drug Use
Household mental illness	Heart disease
Parental separation or divorce	Liver disease
Incarcerated household member	Multiple sexual partners
Bullying (by another child or adult)	Intimate partner violence
Witnessing violence outside/inside the home (especially a mother)	Sexually Transmitted Diseases/Infections
Natural disasters and war	Smoking
Racism, sexism, or any other form of discrimination	Suicide Attempts

Cited by: <https://www.learningsuccessblog.com/stress-and-early-brain-growth-infograph>

8 Things to Remember About Child Development

- 1) Even infants & young children are affected adversely when significant stresses threaten their family & caregiving environments
- 2) Development is a highly interactive process, & life outcomes are not determined solely by genes.
- 3) While attachments to their parents are primary, young children can also benefit significantly from relationships with other responsive caregivers, such as teachers, both within and outside the family.
- 4) A great deal of brain architecture is shaped during the first 3 years after birth, but the window of opportunity for its development does not close on a child's 3rd birthday.
- 5) Severe neglect appears to be at least as great a threat to health & development as physical abuse-possibly even greater
- 6) Young children who have been exposed to adversity or violence do not invariably develop stress-related disorders or grow up to be violent adults.
- 7) Simply removing a child from a dangerous environment will not automatically reverse the negative impacts of that experience.
- 8) Resilience requires relationships, not rugged individualism!

Cited by: <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/8-things-remember-child-development/>

Holiday Thumbprint Cookies

Ingredients: ¼ cup of packed brown sugar-1/4 cup shortening-1/4 cup margarine, softened-1/2 tsp vanilla-1 egg, separated-1 cup Gold Medal all- purpose flour- ¼ tsp salt- ¾ cup finely chopped nuts- Jelly (of choice)

Directions: 1) Heat oven to 350F 2) Mix brown sugar, shortening, butter, vanilla and egg yolk in medium bowl. Stir in flour and salt until dough holds together. 3) Shape dough into 1-inch balls. Beat egg white slightly. Dip each ball into egg white. Roll in nuts. Place about 1 inch apart on ungreased cookie sheet. Press thumb deeply in center of each. 4) Bake about 10 min. or until light brown. Immediately remove from cookie sheet to wire rack. Cool completely, about 30 min. Fill thumbprints with jelly using the colors of your favorite holiday as your guide!



How Much Sleep Do We Really Need?

- Sleep needs vary for different age groups. They are also individually based.

Newborns (0-2 mos.)	Infants (3-11 mos.)	Toddlers (1-3 yrs.)	Preschoolers (3-5 yrs.)	School-Age Children (5-10 yrs.)	Teens (11- 17 yrs.)	Adults (18+)
12-18 hours	14-15 hours	12-14 hours	11-13 hours	10-11 hours	8.5-9.5 hours	7-8 hours

- **Factors that affect your sleep needs include:**
 - Basal Sleep Need: the amount of sleep your body needs on a regular basis for optimal performance
 - Sleep Debt: Accumulated sleep that's lost from poor sleep habits, sickness, awakenings from environmental factors, & other causes
- **Sleep provides AMAZING BENEFITS**
 - Lowers Stress & IMPROVES MOOD
 - Helps you maintain a HEALTHY WEIGHT
 - Improves ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE & COORDINATION
 - Increases your ability to PAY ATTENTION & REMEMBER INFORMATION



For Better Sleep, Follow these TIPS:

- 1) Establish consistent sleep and wake schedules, even on weekends!
- 2) Create a regular, relaxing bedtime routine such as soaking in a hot bath or listening to soothing music
- 3) Create a sleep-conductive bedroom that is dark, quiet, comfortable, & cool
- 4) Exercise regularly!