

Connecting with Your Teens During the Holidays

The holidays are a great time to reconnect with family after busy days of school, work and extracurricular activities. Take time this holiday season to intentionally connect with your teen.

- **Continue family traditions**

- Family traditions are important to most teens. Traditions offer consistency and predictability. Even if your teen says they are bored or acting distant, they appreciate the time together and chance to experience these traditions with family.
- Teens are developing their identity and learning new ways of thinking and relating to others. Engage your teen by asking their thoughts and feelings on traditions, events or their ideas to do together during the holidays.

- **Engage with your teen online**

- Teens exist in two worlds, the real and the online one. Technology plays an important role in how teens learn to relate and communicate with others as well as exploring their identity. Take time to connect and ask your teen to show you how an app works. Teens love to share their knowledge, especially with adults.
- With everyone's consent, encourage your teen to take photos of your family traditions and share the photos with their friends. Make your own family hashtag and take over Instagram. Ask them to teach grandma how to use filters and take silly pictures.

- **Involve your teen in the holiday planning process**

- Ask your teen to help with planning events or tasks like decorating or making a dish for a meal.
- Teens are developing a sense of individuality and part of this is making decisions. Provide options and allow your teen to choose activities themselves, such as decorating the house or tobogganing with their younger siblings. Sharing decision-making power with your teen encourages individuality and independence.

- **Balance family and friends**

- Help your teen balance time with family and their friends. Clearly stating expectations for how much time your teen is expected to spend with family can fend off any holiday explosions.
- Keep in mind the importance of peers during this phase of life and how much your teen is looking forward to seeing friends outside of school. Invite your teen's friends over and include them in some of your family traditions. Or start new traditions! Have a holiday cookie bake-off or homemade toboggan competition.

- **Share the joy of giving**

- Teens have amazing capacity for compassion and empathy. They can be very altruistic and passionate about different causes. Spend time giving back to your community as a family, shovel a neighbour's driveway or bake cookies for the youth shelter.

- **Managing Holiday Stress**

- Holidays can be a stressful time. With kids at home, family visiting and a myriad of holiday events, it's easy to feel overwhelmed. Visit these websites for tips on keeping holiday stress in check:

- Managing Holiday Stress: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/stress-eng.php>

- Fact Sheet: Holiday Stress
http://www.cpa.ca/docs/File/Publications/FactSheets/PsychologyWorksFactSheet_HolidayStress.pdf
- Tips for Parents on Managing Holiday Stress: <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/parents-holiday.aspx>

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References

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