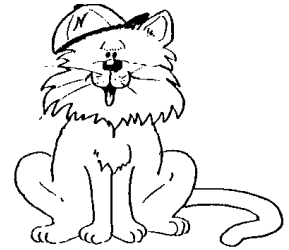


The Wildcat Word

A Newsletter from the Guidance Department of Nottingham West Elementary School
Volume 50, December 2009
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HOLIDAY SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR PARENTS

The holidays can bring great joy and excitement for families, and great stress at the same time. As we approach the “most wonderful time of the year”, here are some tips on how to prevent that wonderful time from becoming chaotic and difficult



Going to Grandma's for the Holidays

A holiday visit to extended family can be an opportunity to learn lifelong lessons about relationships, understanding and humor. Remind your kids that when they're at someone else's home, the rules of that family must be observed. This may involve changes in expectations for behavior or changes in routines, so help your kids prepare. Will they have to tone down the noise level, pay extra attention to table manners, or get along with cousins they don't know well? Discuss these issues in advance to help your kids behave in ways that will work for everyone.

Separated Families and Single Parents

The holidays can be particularly tough for families who have just separated. If it works for your family, continue to use old family traditions, adapted to your new circumstances. Or you may want to make a change and create new traditions that better fit the current situation. Think about those activities that have meant the most to your kids and how you can include them in your new family setting. If possible, single parents should make plans for visits and gift giving with former partners before the holiday season. Be sure your child understands how they will share their holidays with all members of the family.



The Joy of Giving

Even if your family does not celebrate the holidays as religious observances, this can be a wonderful time to teach your children about the values of generosity, peace and caring. Make sure that the holidays are not just about getting. Consider gifts of help or special times together rather than gifts of things. Children really enjoy using their own talents to make gifts. Time spent making holiday gifts or cookies to share is much more memorable than another trip to the mall. With family budgets stretched to the limit in the current recession, this is a great opportunity to take the focus of family celebrations away from material things and place it back on traditional values of “goodwill to all”.

Encouraging Your Shy Child

Everyone feels shy occasionally, depending on the circumstances. Being shy means not being comfortable around people or not wanting to call attention to oneself. Although normal and common, shyness can be painful for both parents and children. We need to realize, however, that **some kids are born to be quieter and less outgoing than other children.** In our social, outgoing culture, these quieter children can sometimes struggle to fit in. The key is to recognize the point where shyness becomes a problem – when it begins to interfere with school or friendships frequently.

If shyness is making interactions at school or getting together with other kids difficult, there are ways you can help. First of all, try to avoid “labeling” your child as shy. Instead ask how he/she is feeling if you notice a tendency to withdraw, and let him/her know that these feelings are normal.

Give your child opportunities to enjoy social situations. Lady Bird Johnson said, *“The way you overcome shyness is to become so wrapped up in something that you forget to be afraid.”* More structured environments (like an art class or a Scout meeting) and smaller groups (one friend rather than a party) are less intimidating for a child who is quieter. Let your child move at his/her own pace in choosing the level of social interaction that he/she is ready for.

Help your child prepare for difficult social situations by discussing them ahead of time and role playing the challenging interaction. Knowing what to say and having a plan for how to respond will help your shy child feel in control of the situation.

Remember that your child may pick up on your signals -- if you are nervous, your child may be nervous. You can encourage your child by sharing your own experiences of shyness and explaining how you handled it. Most importantly, let your child know that shyness is NOT a character flaw. It is nothing to be ashamed of. Watch your child and encourage him/her to take small steps in socializing with peers. Confidence will come with practice.

Shyness does not have to be a major problem, but if you feel it is interfering significantly with your child's life at school and home, please contact your Guidance Counselor or your pediatrician for support.

