

The **Child Mind Institute** published an article by Caroline Miller with helpful tips for reducing stress, helping kids cope, and making new traditions while celebrating the **Holidays During the Pandemic**.

Here are some main points from the article:

- **Don't wait to make plans**

- Predictability is better for kids. By making decisions early, you can help kids be prepared for what's going to happen.
- Outline what Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas, or other holidays you celebrate will look like this year, and help kids cope with it and come up with strategies to feel better.
- Waiting until the last minute to figure out plans will not allow kids time to deal with any confusion or disappointment.

- **Discuss rules in advance**

- Safety measures for any kind of holiday you celebrate should be discussed early and decided in advance. Differences of opinion can be a source of stress. Knowing that safety has been considered can be important if you have a child with a lot of anxiety around COVID.

- **Stay the course**

- What if someone who agreed to certain safety precautions does not adhere? Saying, "Remember, we discussed this, as much as I want to hug you, we have to adhere to the rules we set." It is also helpful to kids to have a script if someone is not respecting the rules: "I'm not allowed to hug this year, but we can wave!"
- Setting a clear timeline with guests can also boost compliance with rules, such as setting a time when guests are expected to leave.

- **Start new traditions**

- If you're not celebrating the way that you typically do this year, you can be proactive and create new activities to make the holidays special during the pandemic, such as building a photo album, swapping dishes that you've cooked, or writing letters to relatives that you may not be able to see this year.
- Doing something kind and generous for someone else around the holidays can also help, like having your child pick a charity that your family can contribute to.
- **Give kids a voice**
  - Letting kids have a role can help them to feel special in positive ways, such as picking a dish to cook, picking a game to play, setting aside time to watch a favorite movie or listen to music.
  - All the changes this year can also be a chance to make the holidays more kid-friendly, like dressing up in costumes, trying new recipes, getting hands-on in the kitchen, and playing games.
- **Let kids express disappointment**
  - Children may be upset about cancelled trips and not seeing their relatives, but instead of telling them that it will be fine, validate their feelings. Acknowledge that you are disappointed too and that it is okay for them to feel disappointed. Model coping with disappointment in a positive way, such as scheduling calls with friends or making a favorite recipe, and help kids to find their own ways to cope.
  - If children are upset or angry about the decision to not participate in large family gatherings, validate those feelings too. Dr. Berman suggests language like: "I understand that you're mad right now. It's okay to feel frustrated. We made this decision because we thought it was the best way to stay safe. But it's okay to feel disappointed and mad." This type of

validation can go a long way in bringing down those heightened feelings and allows you to calmly explain your reasoning. Letting kids know that you hear them helps them to feel respected even when situations do not go the way they want.

For the full article, please visit The Child Mind Institute. The links are available here in [English](#) and [en Español](#).