



Holiday Stress and the Blues

Teens feel stress during the holidays, too. Many adults feel stressed out or get the blues during the winter holidays. But they don't always realize that teens get these feelings, too. The same things can cause these feelings for teens as they do for adults:

- Hectic schedule
- Increased family conflict or misunderstanding
- Crowds
- Pressure to live up to idealized images of holidays and family life
- Changes in diet and routines
- Cabin fever
- Pressure to find the perfect gifts
- Not getting the gifts you wanted
- Other unmet expectations
- Increased grief about divorce, death, or other family changes (see below)

Shortened amount of daylight (a cause of serious depression for many) Also, many teens feel empty because holidays are not the same as when they were young kids. All on top of the normal stresses of growing up! Feeling stressed or getting the blues during the holidays is normal. Some simple steps can help ease the feelings for your teen and get them through the season.

Help your teens manage their feelings. Encourage them...

- **To talk.** Help them express their feelings. Really listen to them. Try not to judge them or overreact
- **To take a break.** Getting away from others can be refreshing. Encourage them to spend time relaxing or doing an activity for themselves.
- **To exercise.** This is one of the best ways to work off stress.
- **To eat right.** Holidays often come with sugary and high-fat foods. Eating some is fine, but eating too much will only make mood swings worse.
- **To do something charitable.** It can be easy to lose sight of what the holidays are really about. Doing something for someone else can help change one's outlook.

Manage your own stress and blues, too.

If you are feeling stressed or sad yourself, your children may be picking up on your feelings. You can help them by taking care of yourself. Plus, they learn from watching you. If you handle your feelings well, they will learn to handle their own feelings better. In addition to the steps above...

- **Plan ahead.** Be realistic and prioritize. Allow extra time, in case things don't go as planned.

- **Work out schedules together, as a family.** Give everyone a chance to express what they want. Be clear about your expectations of each other. Try to schedule some time apart, too.

- **Put aside differences with friends or family members for the holidays.** Don't stuff your feelings. Just wait for a better time to try to work things out.

- **Let go of ideas of perfection.** Try to enjoy things as they are, not as you think they should be.

- **Limit your alcohol use.** Drinking too much will only increase feelings of sadness or anxiety. Let your children see that you can celebrate without alcohol. Also, be aware that teens may be under more peer pressure to drink during the holidays. They take their cues from you.





Parent Spotlight

Our Parent spotlight features one of the resilient families that participated.

This Fall Ms. Christian and her family successfully completed the seven week Strengthening Family program. She is seen above receiving her certificate of completion with her 12 year old grandson Nafee who looked forward to coming every week. To see this family commit to this program and watch the metamorphosis take place is a testament to the benefit of Peer to Peer support and connections made in support groups.

Ms. Marva Christian is receiving recognition for her dedication to her family and keeping them safe at home, in their community and in school.

“She is a good provider who is responsible, kindhearted, caring and has a good sense of humor, and who really loves her family” states Lossie Smalls-Webb her Family Partner. The mother of 4 is the caregiver for 5 grandchildren.

Each time one of her grandchildren which she is now raising was presented for foster care, she would not allow the “System ” to place them anywhere except in her home. When things got tough, Ms. Christian strength appears from beneath her sometimes quiet demeanor .

She never gives up and lets it be known to others! Ms. Christian is a strong supporter of her family . We appreciate having her as a regular participant in our educational workshops and support groups.

The Strengthening Families Program for Parents and Youth ages 10-14 family skills-building curriculum is designed to :

- prevent teen substance abuse and other behavior problems,
- strengthen parenting skills
- build family strengths

The program is delivered in seven sessions for parents and youth using realistic videos, role-playing, discussions, learning games, and family projects.

Families and youth learned methods that have been scientifically evaluated and shown to be effective.

Need Help?



Warm Line...

Help is just a phone call away!

We are here to listen! Our caring staff is here to answer your questions and provide information about resources.

973-395-1441

Monday through Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.



8 Keys for Kids



Adolescent development is more than high academic expectations, career development, and independence. Families play a pivotal role in supporting teens to explore their identities and make connections with peers and other adults. With this in mind, the National 4-H Council has identified eight "Keys for Kids":

- ☞ **Security:** Youth feel physically and emotionally safe ("I feel safe.")
- ☞ **Belonging:** Youth experience belonging and ownership ("I'm in.")
- ☞ **Acceptance:** Youth develop self-worth ("What I say and do counts.")
- ☞ **Independence:** Youth discover self ("I like to try new things.")

☞ **Relationships:** Youth develop quality relationships with peers and adults ("I care about others.")

☞ **Values:** Youth discuss conflicting values and form their own ("I believe...")

☞ **Achievement:** Youth feel the pride and accountability that comes with mastery ("I can do it.")

☞ **Recognition:** Youth expand their capacity to enjoy life and know that success is possible ("I feel special.")

Understanding all aspects of adolescent development helps families of youth with disabilities and those who work with them to address these critical issues and improve adult outcomes.



Excerpt from: Kris Peterson, Supporting the Dynamic Development of Youth with Disabilities During Transition: A Guide for Families, 2007, National Center on Secondary Education and Transition Institute on Community Integration University of Minnesota ncset.org

What to look for in 2011

Call now and register to make sure you are guaranteed a seat.

Monthly IEP clinic

Adolescent Development

What's normal and when to be concerned

Medication and your Child

Understanding your child's diagnosis

Family Journey Celebration

Mothers raising son's to be Men

Bi-lingual support group

Parenting Skills

Kids on the Continuum
for Difficult to Dangerous

Calendar of Events

Mother Daughter Circle
January 3rd, 10th, 17th, 24th 6 pm

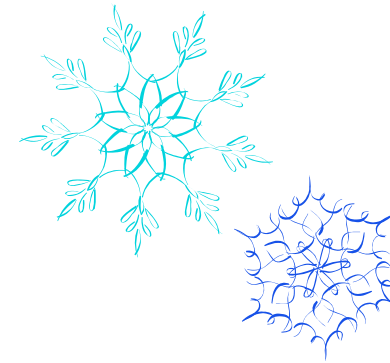
Parents Anonymous
January 11th 18th 25th

Strengthening Families Program 6pm
Wednesdays January 19th, 26th,
February 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd, 30th

Monday Morning
January 24th 6 pm

Parents Anonymous
February 8th 15th 22nd

All sessions begin at 6:30pm
60 Evergreen Place East Orange, NJ 07018
Tel. 973-395-1441



What can you do?

- Support group facilitators
- Teachers
- Arts instructors
- Chaperones
- Parent Mentors
- College Students can volunteer to fulfill community service requirements



Support



Educate



Advocate