

# Parental guidance: Keep holidays stress-free

December 13, 2010 by BETH WHITEHOUSE / [beth.whitehouse@newsday.com](mailto:beth.whitehouse@newsday.com)

**Can you suggest ways to make the chaotic holiday season as stress-free as possible for my children?**

The Therapy Center for Children, with locations in Patchogue and Miller Place, offers these tips:

1. Try to keep to your child's schedule. If bedtime is 8 p.m., explain to visitors or hosts that your child needs his sleep. If a child must be up late, incorporate a nap into that day's afternoon and outline the day's plan to the child so he knows what to expect, advises Christina Bellini, director of the center.

2. Spread holiday activities out over a few days so your children aren't overstimulated or burned out.

3. Leave your child home when doing heavy-duty holiday shopping, or shop online.

4. Consider opening a few presents at a time throughout [Christmas Day](#). That way the child can enjoy each gift and not be overwhelmed. Have batteries and tools on hand so a child can play with a gift as soon as possible after opening it. This avoids outbursts of frustration from an excited child who doesn't have patience.

5. Cookies, candies and sweets are ubiquitous; limit them. Prepare the child for her limits before you go to a party or activity, Bellini advises. "Say, 'You can have two cookies. One cookie for each hand. When that's done, you're finished,'" she suggests.

6. Practice unwrapping gifts and expressing appropriate gratitude so your child will be prepared. "Role playing it in your own home gives the child the opportunity to have the experience . . . to know proper etiquette and use words effectively," Bellini says.



[< back to article](#)