

LIFESTYLE



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Holidays & Meltdowns

By Patty Wipfler

It's one of those things you can set your clock by — your child “erupting” as a major holiday or birthday gets closer. With the bulk of the holiday season nearly upon us, it's an ideal time to examine why this is the case.

If it's any consolation, every family deals with this issue. As a holiday or birthday nears, it puts extra demands and stress on parents, who often overlook that children also tend to become stressed. This is because they get *less* relaxed time with parents, and *increased* expectations of good behavior are placed on them in stores, at homes they're not familiar with, and among people they may not know well.

Most children tend to do their best to cooperate and be flexible. Then, they hit “the wall” — and they can't go another minute without “exploding.” Such meltdowns, unfortunately, often occur in public places, family gatherings, or other inconvenient times for parents. And yet, children full of tension simply have to “let it out.” They're “wired” to eject emotions when they just can't think any longer. Only when they're done releasing these bad feelings can they again be reasonable, thoughtful, and flexible. What can parents do to cope? Try:

➤ **Being prepared.** Give up false hopes that tension will disappear this holiday season. Just as you're in the habit of preparing for a relative's quirky behavior, so you can prepare to handle your child's meltdown. Play with your child for five to 10 minutes before leaving for Grandma's. Elicit some laughter! This play will help him/her feel more connected to you and regain his/her sense that life is good. If behavior has already gone off-track, gently but firmly set a limit. After you do this, remain with the child and gently assist to release his/her feelings. Hold the limit and, at the same time, love the child. Children don't usually cry to embarrass or manipulate their parents — they cry to unload bad feelings so they can feel better. It's natural for a child.

➤ **Letting go of unreasonable expectations.** Don't buy into media images of what a holiday is “supposed to” look like. Stress the occasion and not pricey gifts — especially if you really can't afford an expensive Christmas, which a lot of folks can't these days! Say something to the child like: “We're going to give (or Santa is going to bring) ONE special gift for each person this year, and THEN we're going to have four flavors of ice cream, as much as we want!”

Get Rid of Unwanted Holiday Pounds

By Dale Anderson, M.D.

A typical person gains an average of seven to 10 pounds between Thanksgiving and Christmas. As if that isn't bad enough, according to the *New England Journal of Medicine*, most people don't lose the weight they gain. Repeat this cycle over three years, and you could be carrying around an additional 30 pounds.

Unfortunately, people equate the word “diet” with deprivation. “Diet” is actually greek for “a way of life.” Therefore, we all need to banish diets and focus on our way of life. Follow this philosophy:

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➤ **Relieving your own stress.** Children aren't the only ones who need to “unload.” Parents may also need to “vent” when hemmed in by holiday expectations no one can possibly meet. Do you have a friend or EAP counselor who really knows how to listen? Do you own any CDs with soothing music? No matter how you do it, find a way to relieve the tension!

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CLIP-N-SAVE!

www.foodfit.com

Healthy Recipe: Baked Sweet Potatoes

INGREDIENTS:

- 4 medium sweet potatoes (or yams), scrubbed clean

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION:

- Calories per serving: 130
- Protein: 2 g.
- Carbohydrates: 33 g.
- Sodium: 45 mg.
- Saturated fat: 0 g.
- Fat: 0 g.
- Fiber: 4 g

Serving size: 1 potato

DIRECTIONS:

- 1 Preheat oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit.
- 2 Prick the skin of the potatoes with a fork in several places to prevent them from bursting.
- 3 Place the potatoes in a warm oven to bake for 45 to 60 minutes, until tender.



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An Apple a Day Really Does ...

By Sherry Thompson

Does an apple a day really keep the doctor away? The answer is, "Yes." Among other things, research has proven that apples:

- ✓ **Help the body better absorb Vitamin C**, which greatly helps your immune system.
- ✓ **Prevent heart disease**. Apples are rich in flavonoids, which act as antioxidants.
- ✓ **Are low in calories**. A regular-size apple only has 70-100 calories. Due to the natural sugars, they can also reduce the desire for candy.
- ✓ **Prevent cancers**, such as colon, prostate, and breast cancer.
- ✓ **Contain phenols**, which reduce bad cholesterol and increase good cholesterol.
- ✓ **Prevent tooth decay**. The juice in apples has properties that can reduce up to 80% of the bacteria that causes tooth decay.

On average, Americans consume 120 apples per year, which comes out to 1 apple per week. So, how are you doing at keeping the doctor and dentist way? ♦

Sherry Thompson, RN, is clinical development coordinator with Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare in Racine, WI. Additional source: Succeed With This, www.succeedwiththis.com.

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Children want us close when they're feeling bad. Fixing the situation can usually be done AFTER these feelings are over. ♦

Patty Wipfler is the director of Hand in Hand, a Palo Alto, CA-based nonprofit organization that provides information and training in parenting, listening, and leadership skills. For more information, visit www.parentingbyconnection.org.

Get Rid of Unwanted Holiday Pounds

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"If you can spill it, don't swill it!"
By following this one simple rule, you'll shed unwanted pounds. Consider this: If you stopped drinking one eight-ounce glass of milk, one can of sugared soda, and one small glass of fruit juice a day — and with no other changes in your diet or exercise — you would drop over 36 pounds in a single year. Additional recommendations include:

☑ **H2O is the way to go**. Drink eight to 16 ounces of water every day. Have only an occasional glass of wine, beer, or non-fat milk.

☑ **Avoid "on the go" drinks**. They only give a temporary feeling of having "eaten." Within an hour or so, you'll be raiding a refrigerator or vending machine to fill up on real food, which will add still more calories to the ones you've already consumed in liquid form.

☑ **Dilution is the solution**. Drink zero-calorie drinks, such as diet soda, in moderation. However, if so much plain water won't cut it, try dilution. Dilute any flavored drink — even diet soda — by 50% to 90%, and you'll still get the sweetness and taste you crave.

☑ **Make time for tea**. Today's tea comes in a multitude of flavors, meaning that you don't have to add sweeteners to have great taste.

If you follow the liquidation way of life — during the holidays and into the new year — you'll be healthier and more energetic. ♦

Dr. Dale Anderson is a noted author and speaker who has practiced medicine for nearly 50 years. For more information, visit www.acthappy.com. Editor's note: This article is not to be construed as a substitute for medical advice. Consult your health care professional regarding the applicability of recommendations appearing in this article.