

The Family Friend



A collection of articles and quotes to aid your family in daily living.

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Holiday Stress?

—lists provided by the
Christian Counseling Center
Of Paducah, KY

Editors note: If the next three articles look familiar, it may be because we printed them in the first year of *The Family Friend*. Good information, of course, is worth reprinting! They were in a handout produced by the Christian Counseling Center, Paducah, KY—L.C.

Causes of Holiday Stress

- Emphasizing things over people. Our gift-buying often overshadows the more important, that is, relationships.
- Feeling responsible for making the holidays a perfect success. When things don't go well, we feel guilty and resentful.
- Making "getting everything done" the major goal rather than enjoying the fun of shared activities.
- Letting "commercial pressures" create an attitude of we must buy everyone the perfect gift, even to the point of getting in over our heads.
- Memories of lost loved ones or of a time when holidays were better.

- Realizing we have not achieved our resolutions made during last year's holidays.
- Having unrealistic expectations. Hoping that this year Uncle Mike won't come to Christmas dinner drunk, or that you will get to see your high school friends while you're in town.

Families and Holidays

Why do things go O.K. for the first day or two of the holidays, but then they end up with tempers flaring, mounting tensions and old resentments flaring up?

- The feeling of being a child again when back at home with your parents
- Difficulty recognizing your own children as grown adults.
- Feeling isolated or alienated from your family after holiday visits.

How to Handle Holiday Stress

1. Share Work—Spread the responsibility of the event around. Plan a progressive holiday dinner instead of going it alone; let others help you with the baking and shopping.
2. Enjoy Yourself—Focus on having fun and don't focus so much on keeping a schedule of activities.

3. Be Selective—Don't over-commit yourself by accepting invitations to more holiday events than you can realistically participate in.
4. Be Realistic—Recognize that things don't go perfect other times and they won't do so just because it's the holidays. Don't put the pressure on yourself or others that you have to be at your best all the time.
5. Maintain your normal routine—Try to stick to your regular diet and sleep routines.
6. Take "time-outs" to relax—Leave reminders to help you relax—a piece of red yarn on your car dash, or mirror, or other familiar spots to trigger you to take 3 deep breaths and relax!

"Rejoice always in the Lord. I repeat: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is close by. Worry about nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving,, let your requests be made known to God.. God's peace, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."

(Philippians 4:4-7, McCord's New Testament Translation of the Everlasting Gospel)

“Askability”

I'm not sure that "askability" is a word (it didn't clear my spell check). Whether it's a word or not it does describe a concept I want to discuss. Over the past few weeks, I've been going over the Active Christian Parenting curriculum (*Minneapolis. Ausburg Fortress, 1995*) with a group of young parents. At one point the curriculum discussed communication blocks and parents are urged to set a goal of becoming "askable parents." An askable parent is defined as "someone whose opinion the child will ask for." That becomes a pretty important dynamic as our children advance in age and have to deal with things like friend selection, drugs, careers, life companions, etc.

I was thinking about a commercial I've been hearing on the radio. A woman talks about all the things her daughter wanted to share with her in early childhood. In puzzled amazement she asks, "So why didn't she come to me the first time someone tried to pass her a joint?" Good question and one that needs to be countered with another question. Are you sure you were an askable parent?

"Askability" has to be one of the most important components of communication because an askable parent is a trusted parent. We aren't born askable. If you were fortunate enough to grow up in a home with parents who welcomed your questions, then you may well have learned the skill by observation. Many of us grew up in a world where the prevailing philosophy was "Children are to be seen and not heard." Parents never

thought it was important be "askable." We weren't considered old enough, wise enough or mature enough to even ask intelligent questions and our opinions were even more suspect. Children often found themselves continually rebuffed by such statements as "You'll understand it better when you get older;" "I'm busy right now and I don't have time for such foolishness;" "Don't worry about things like that, they aren't important; and "I don't know why don't you go ask your mother?" So who did they ask? Usually, they asked their peers. Do you ever wonder why some children are so heavily influenced by their peers? It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure it out. They are "askable."

We deter askability when we

- 1.belittle.
 - 2.ridicule.
 - 3.condescend.
 - 4.ignore.
 - 5.reject.
 - 6.discourage.
- avoid.

We encourage askability when we

- 1.listen.
- 2.encourage.
- 3.praise.
- 4.understand.
- 5.assist.
- 6.accept
- 7.share

The Bible speaks clearly about a father's responsibility to his child. In Colossians 3:21, Paul wrote, "Fathers do not embitter your children, or they will

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become discouraged." People who lack the trait of "askability" run the risk of embittering and discouraging their children. We don't think you can be a responsible parent in today's world if you aren't "askable."

—Norman Bales, All About

Only a Box

It's only a box of collectible junk, but in it is the wisdom of life.

A saying, a poem yet unpublished, a faded picture, a love letter from the wife . . .

Throw it away? NEVER!
NEVER! I'd just as soon cast myself aside to the wind,

For in that box of so called junk is my beginning, my being, my end.

—Jack Exum, from The Wisdom Box, p. 9.

