



# ChildBuilders

Houston's Advocates for Mental Health in Children

## Simplify your holiday celebrations

By Joanne Go, ChildBuilders Community Education Director

Aim for less stress this holiday season. Most of us are wishing for the simple comforts of home and family. So, give some thought to what you can do to create those basics without making yourself busier than you are now.

This holiday season let go of old expectations of what makes the perfect Ramadan, Hanukah, Christmas or Kwanzaa celebration and think about which traditions provide real joy for you and your family. Decide what you value most and let go of the rest.

If just thinking about preparations for the holidays feels overwhelming to you, start by making a list of everything you would like to accomplish to make the holidays special. Then put stars by the activities that give you the most joy. These are the keepers, the tasks that you will put your energies into.

You may decide not to send out cards this year, or not to host an event that you have done for the last three years. If you are worried about what others may think about you scaling back, plan to tell them that you are simplifying your celebrations this year.

Here are a few suggestions to get you started:

**Invite others to bring a dish.** If you are cooking a large holiday meal, this eases your load and helps others feel good about participating in the celebration.

**Share chores with children.** Children most want to help between ages 2 and 5, and that's the time to give them simple chores. Toddlers can help carry and sort the laundry. Three year olds can learn to fold towels. Older children can help out in the kitchen. Perhaps the novelty of the holiday preparations will help motivate those who may resist helping. Your cheerful words of encouragement help your children know that their help is needed and appreciated.

**Resist the urge to spend more money.** Instead of going to the store to buy ornaments and icicles for the Christmas tree, spend a few hours at home with your family stringing popcorn or cutting gingerbread men shapes out of paper bags to decorate the tree. These homemade decorations are special because they hold the memories of time spent together.

**Create some quiet time each day for your children and yourself.** Often children misbehave because they're overtired. If you allow yourself to become overly tired, you won't have the patience required to cope with the stress or the demands of your children.

This may be a good year to **begin a family tradition of service.** Choose an activity that allows your family to give back to the community. This helps children appreciate what they have. Local non-profit agencies or your place of

worship can suggest ways that your family can help out. You may also call the **United Way Help Line at 713-957-4357** for information and referral for holiday programs where your family can help or to get information if your family is in need of assistance this holiday season.

Sometimes the stress of this busy season creates depression or anxiety for your family. If so, do not hesitate to seek help from one of the organizations listed on this ChildBuilders brochure.

ChildBuilders (formerly known as HAMIC), founded in 1974, is a non-profit organization that provides innovative programs to educate parents, children, teachers and the community about the emotional well-being of children and their families. [www.childbuilders.org](http://www.childbuilders.org) ChildBuilders Community Education.

For further information & referral  
call your child's school counselor

DePelchin Children's Center	713-730-2335
ESCAPE Family Resource Center	713-942-9500
Harris County Psychiatric Center	713-741-5000
Jewish Family Service	713-667-9336
Mental Health Association	713-522-5161
MHMRA of Harris County	713-970-7070
NAMI Metro Houston	281-579-3750
United Way of Texas Gulf Coast	211 or 713-957-4357

© ChildBuilders 2003