

# Children and Holiday Stress

By Colleen Gengler, University of Minnesota Extension Family Relations Educator

Holiday hustle and bustle can be stressful. As a caregiver you can have some special things going on. But at the same time, you will want to keep the normal routines you have as much as possible for children. Routines are important for children, so try to maintain normal meal and naptime schedules during the holiday time. Children may feel upset, grouchy or anxious during this busy time. Don't expect kids to be happy and appreciative at all times during the holidays.

Try setting aside quiet times to play soft music, read stories or take a walk with children to bring down the frenzied activity level that often prevails around holidays. Here are a few other reminders for the holiday time:

- ❖ Concentrate on people instead of things. For example, it is more important to have fun making holiday cookies than to have beautiful cookies.
- ❖ Plan celebrations during the times of the day when children are best able to cope with a new or special situation.
- ❖ Limit sugar, salt and caffeine during meals and snacks.
- ❖ Have children in your care help prepare for celebrations by doing small tasks like setting the table or designing and coloring placemats.

Most of these suggestions are important all during the year, not just at holiday time.