

Handling Holiday Season Excitement

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The Halloween treats are still fresh and your kids are already quivering with excitement about Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa and two whole weeks of winter break from school?

If you're wondering how you're going to manage this anticipation-fueled energy, here are a few ideas from author Elizabeth Crary.

- Jump rope. Variations: jump back and forth across a threshold or the crack in a sidewalk, or simply up and down. For example, "I am soooo excited about Christmas and I know you are, too. Let's bundle up and go out and jump on the sidewalk. I'll use the second hand on my watch to see how many jumps we can make in two minutes."

- Look outside. Watch the clouds, the wind, the rain or the birds. You might say to your children, "We need a time out to calm us down, but this time that's a time looking out. So let's sit on the couch and see what the clouds look like, and if there are any squirrels running along the power line."

- Write a letter. Children who can't write can look through magazines to find pictures for a rebus-style note or they can draw pictures. You might get them started by saying, "Let's write a letter to your Mom or Dad." Or suggest a letter to a grandparent or to Santa.

You might also create an Advent-style "activity" jar, with lots of projects and activities for this late autumn and early winter period. If children select one activity at random a day, they'll have something special to look forward to each day, and they'll be less likely to focus on one far-off event. You can fill the jar with activities chosen by you, by the children in your care, or by all of you together. Examples: a trip to the library, a museum, a noontime concert, or the open gym at your community center, walking or riding bikes, building a snow family, baking, making holiday decorations and cards.

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