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## **Tips for Parents on Managing Holiday Stress**

The holidays can be a stressful time for parents, especially if you're wondering where to get the money to buy holiday gifts. In fact, a recent poll by the American Psychological Association shows that 61% of Americans cite lack of money as a top cause of holiday stress followed by the pressures of gift giving, lack of time, and credit card debt. What's more, one in five Americans are worried that holiday stress could affect their physical health and 36% say they either eat or drink alcohol to cope with holiday stress. Forty-five percent say they rely on exercise to relieve stress while 44% turn to religious and spiritual activities.

People tend to reduce stress in ways they have learned over the course of time because they turn to what they know. You may take comfort from eating or drinking because it's familiar, even though it's not good for your health. But, there are other behaviors you can learn to further relieve stress and its effects that may be both better for you and longer lasting.

Here are some tips to help parents deal with holiday stress and build resilience:

**Set expectations.** Talk to your kids about expectations for gifts and holiday activities. Be open with them if money is an issue. Depending on a child's age, parents can use this as an opportunity to teach their kids about the value of money and responsible spending. And be realistic. Take small concrete steps to deal with holiday tasks instead of overwhelming yourself with goals that are too far reaching for a busy time.

**Keep things in perspective.** Try to consider stressful situations in a broader context and keep a long-term perspective. Avoid blowing events out of proportion. And teach your kids how to keep things in perspective, including what type of and the number of gifts they receive.

**Make connections.** Good relationships with family and friends are important. So, view the holidays as a time to reconnect with people. Additionally, accepting help and support from those who care about you can help alleviate stress. Even volunteering at a local charity with your kids is a good way to connect with others, assist someone in need and teach your kids about the value of helping others.

**Take care of yourself.** Pay attention to your own needs and feelings during the holiday season. Engage in activities that you and your family enjoy and find relaxing. Taking care of yourself helps keep your mind and body healthy and primed to deal with stressful situations. Consider cutting back television viewing for kids and instead, get the family out together. It promotes activity and takes kids away from sedentary time and possible influence from advertisements.