



## BUILDING HEALTHY FAMILIES

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### Every dollar does make a difference

When you support Building Healthy Families, you are helping ensure that Willamette County's children grow up in healthy, stable and in loving homes. Last year, BHF served over 270 children and their parents; your generous assistance will help us continue our work and serve even more. Every dollar does make a difference!

BHF Programs: Alternative Education \* Community Resource Team \* Exploration: K-4th program & Mentor/Tutoring \* In Home Visits \* Literacy Link \* Parent Education \* SMART Reading

Thank you! Amy N. Johnson, Executive Director

### Parenting Education

Skate with Santa December 24th  
1:00pm—3:00pm Enterprise City Park

Toddler Play Group Fridays Enterprise

Please contact Maria Weer for detailed information and registration materials.



# Thank You!



## Building Healthy Families Volunteers

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## Avoiding the Holiday Speed Bumps



As the holidays approach, families everywhere are scrambling to finish their shopping, decorate their homes and prepare their holiday meals. While every family wants to make the holidays an enjoyable time for their children, it's almost a given that there will be some minor speed bumps along the way. It can be especially tricky for families with younger children. Here are my important tips for parents to keep in mind to make the holiday season as stress-free as possible for Mom, Dad and the kids.

### 1. Plan ahead:

Make a list of what **MUST** get done and keep expectations realistic about anything else. Get input from all family members and try to include a little something for everyone. Ask for help. You don't have to do everything all alone. For example, try doing a "baby-sit swap" with another family; they can watch your children when you go shopping, then you watch their children so they can do their shopping.

### 2. Maintain your routines:

If you have to bring your children with you when you shop, try to work around their schedule. Try shopping in short time periods and do not skip their meal time or nap time. Remember to bring along snacks, water, and a favorite doll or toy and take breaks when necessary. If you are stressed out your child will be quick to pick up on that and will become stressed as well. When that happens, it's time to go home.

### 3. Buy age appropriate gifts:

When buying gifts for children, it's important to shop for the child, not the parent. Children may not be ready for the favorite toys that you remember from your childhood. Great gifts for infants include soft dolls or stuffed animals, bath or teething toys. Children ages 1-3 do best with toys that they can manipulate or make things with, like blocks, balls, baby dolls or simple interactive toys. Use the age guidelines on the packages and your own sense of your child to pick a gift that will be a good fit. Remember, you do not need to spend a fortune to make your child happy.

### 4. Santa can be scary to young children:

Again, it's important to view things from your child's perspective. Getting a child's picture taken with Santa is a "must do" for many families but it can be terrifying for some children. Very young children don't quite get the concept of "Santa" yet, so prepare your child for what's going to happen. Show pictures of Santa and practice if you can. When it's your child's turn to meet Santa, convey calm and a sense that this person is someone safe. If it's not working out, don't force it or maybe try again later. The last thing you want is a picture of your child screaming on Santa's lap.

### 5. Books make great gifts too!

Reading is so important to a child's development and the holidays are a great time to nurture a child's love of reading. There are great holiday books available for children of all ages. A favorite in my house (for elementary aged children) is *The Trees of the Dancing Goats* by Patricia Polacco. This is a heartwarming story with great illustrations about respecting holiday traditions other than your own. Speak to a librarian or the specialist at your favorite bookstore to find books that will be perfect for your child.

### 6. Tradition! Tradition!

Parents often bring holiday traditions from their families of origin and then with their children, develop new traditions. It's important when developing new traditions to be flexible so that everyone is included in some way. After all, the point is to promote the feeling of family togetherness. One great tradition that everyone can get in on is making cookies. Whether you're using an old family recipe or pre-made cookie dough this a great hands on activity for kids. The finished product doesn't have to look like it came from a bakery. In fact, for younger kids, the best cookies are those with the most frosting and sprinkles. Happy eating!

### 7. Holiday parties can sometimes be adult-only:

As party invitations are streaming in, it's important to find out whether or not they are "kid friendly" parties. If your children are invited ask your host/hostess if other children will be there also. Bring a game or toy to occupy your child and some food from home if your child is a finicky eater. Also bring a change of clothes for your child as they can get pretty uncomfortable in their fancy party outfits. Holiday parties are a chance for everyone to unwind and enjoy each other's company.

### 8. More is not always better:

It's tempting to spoil our children and grandchildren with lots of gifts, but this can be overwhelming for young children. When tearing the wrapping off a multitude of presents becomes the fun part, kids don't get to appreciate the gifts and keep looking for more. To avoid this, try spacing out the gifts so kids get a chance to play with one or two before they open another. The holiday season is also a wonderful time to teach our children the importance of giving to others. Give them a dollar to give to the bell-ringer at the mall or have them help pick out a toy for the toy drive. There are so many wonderful opportunities for fun and family during the holidays.

### Best Wishes!

Reference: Goldberg, <http://blog.goldbergertoy.com/2009/06/holiday-tips.html>