

BANANAS HANDOUT

Bah, Humbug!



Surviving this coming holiday season may require some fancy footwork. This is the time parents feel bombarded from all sides – holiday articles, T.V., radio and newspaper advertisements, gift catalogs, not to mention “requests” from our own children. And, we may end up stretching ourselves, our finances and our time beyond what is reasonable or even merry. All of us at BANANAS hope everyone can make it through until the New Year in as sane a manner as possible. Here are some of the ways we are going to try to survive those last few weeks of the year. Perhaps some of these suggestions will work for your family too:

Don't Be Seduced Into Making All Your Holiday Gifts unless you have the time, energy and necessary skills. Those darling aprons that promise to be made in an afternoon will probably consume a weekend. Those never fail homemade candy recipes may put your stove out of commission. The busiest time of the year is not a good time to take up a new hobby. Homemade gifts are nice, but if you don't have the time to make any – **don't feel guilty!**

Ditto For Making Holiday Decorations...wreaths, candles, elaborate greeting cards. Where possible turn over the decorating to older children. If your child is still a toddler, most decorations can be and attractive as well as potentially dangerous nuisance anyway.

Keep Entertaining And Guests (Coming And Going) To A Manageable Level. Plan potlucks where everyone contributes. Don't accept invitations unless you really want to go out. Watch sweets and holiday grog; they don't necessarily help you keep the holiday spirit. Hangovers and parenting are a difficult mix.

Ask Your Children What They Really Would Like For Gifts rather than buying them the special toy you wanted when you were their age. If Sally wants roller skates, don't be upset if she rejects a dollhouse. Also, be honest and realistic. If your child wants a toy which costs too much, it's better to say so ahead of time. Explain why and don't feel bad about it (or try not to). First baby? Go slow – you have many holidays ahead. Infants and toddlers are pleased with very simple gifts and often prefer the boxes and wrappings to the toys! Remember that all children like to open gifts – so lots of small useful items wrapped separately will be great fun.

Set A Holiday Budget and then try to stick to it. A stack of bills one can't pay is not a good start for the New Year. Children get overwhelmed with toy commercials this time of year. If your child is susceptible, limit the T.V. watching and discuss the “commercial” purpose of commercials. (One staff member took another approach. Her child very much wanted a “junk” toy which was heavily advertised. It wasn't too expensive so she bought the toy and when her daughter was disappointed, she gently made the point that commercials often make things look much better than they really are.) And, who says that presents make the holiday anyway?

Try To Set Aside Some Time To Shop when you aren't exhausted and potentially a victim of impulse buying. Try to arrange exchange child care with a friend or if feasible, hire someone to care for your child. You will make better choices when you're not tired and desperate.

Protect Your Children And Yourself from the over-commercialization of the holidays. Celebrate in a way that has meaning for you and your family. Better a simple holiday with relaxed parents than lots of “celebrating” presided over by parents at the end of their wits.

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