

How to Make the Holidays Meaningful for Your Kids

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The holidays can be a stressful time. For many parents, it is a time where kids focus on what they want and how many presents they will get instead of other more important things. To help your kids have a more meaningful holiday, talk about the holiday, create your own traditions, do activities together, and give back to the community.

Method
1

Method 1 of 3: Addressing The Meaning of the Holiday



1 Discuss the meaning of the holiday. Whether you celebrate Christmas, Hanukkah, or Kwanzaa, you and your family can learn the meaning of the holiday. Read the origin story about the holiday or research where certain traditions come from.^[1]

- As you learn about the holiday, talk about it with your kids. Ask them questions and make sure they understand what they are learning.



2 Talk about holiday memories. Another way to make the holidays meaningful is to share holiday memories with each other. Ask your children what their favorite memories are and why. Share with them stories about past holidays. Make sure to include stories about family members they may not have met so they will know about their ancestors.[2]

- If family members are no longer with you, spend time sharing memories about those you love. That keeps them with you and your family.
- You may tell the same stories each year, but that's okay. Sharing holiday stories each year is a great tradition.



3 Read holiday books. As the holidays get closer, you can get together with your kids or as a family and read holiday books. You can choose a new book or story each night, or read one every few nights.[3]

- If you want to read a longer novel, get together and read a few chapters each night.

4 Watch holiday movies. There are lots of great kid-friendly holiday movies that you can enjoy with your kids. Try sitting down as a family to watch a movie once per week in the weeks leading up to the holidays.

- Try introducing your kids to some of your favorite holiday movies, or watch holiday classics with them, such as *Charlie Brown Christmas*, *Frosty the Snowman*, and Dr. Seuss' *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*.^[4]

Method
2

Method 2 of 3: Focusing on Holiday Traditions



1 Create traditions. Holidays are centered around traditions, and your family may have some special cultural traditions as well. Ask your children what their favorite traditions are and continue to do that. Continue traditions from your childhood with your children. Explain to them what it was like when you were a kid at the holidays and why your family did those traditions. If your family has no traditions, make new ones.^[5] ^[6]

- Think about the traditions that your family has and ask a grandparent or other older relative about the origins of those traditions. You can also ask grandparents and great grandparents about what their traditions were growing up and what traditions are special to them.
- You can create traditions around anything. You may always get together and make the same baked goods, listen to the same holiday album while decorating, or go to the same place together.



2 Decorate together. Make decorating an experience for your entire family. Go together to a tree farm to get a Christmas tree then go home and decorate it. Have everyone go outside and put up lights in the yard. Get your kids to help place decorations around your home.^[7]

- If your family does not celebrate Christmas, then decorate for the holidays you do celebrate, whether it is Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, or Yule.
- Encourage your kids to suggest themes for decorations. Give each of them a surface or a room to decorate in their theme.



3 Create an activity advent calendar. Advent calendars are countdowns to Christmas (or to the holiday that your family celebrates) that are usually filled with a piece of candy for each day. Instead of candy, make the countdown meaningful with an activity for each day leading up to it.^[8]

- For example, if you celebrate Christian Christmas, you can read a scripture some of the days leading to Christmas. Other ideas are doing something kind in the spirit of the holidays, baking something together, or creating a holiday craft together.
- Come up with a set number of activities for the days leading up to the holiday. You can do seven, 10, or even 24.



4 Have a present wrapping party. Even the smallest thing can be a meaningful experience for kids. Turn on music or a holiday movie, get some cookies and hot chocolate, and pile in the floor to wrap gifts.^[9]

- Let your kids wrap presents, put the tape on the paper, or place bows.



5 Plan a holiday outing. The holidays can be a busy time, so taking the time to plan a special outing with your family can be a great way to make the holidays meaningful. Take your kids to see Santa, go look at a local lights display, or go see a holiday play or ballet. Make it a joint effort and let everyone have a say in what you do.^[10]

- You can make it a tradition where you do one special thing each year. You can rotate and let different family members choose the outing each year.



6 Organize a family holiday night at home. Going out is fun during the holidays, but staying home can be just as fun. Buy your family holiday pajamas, socks, shirts, or hats, turn on Christmas music or movies, and do something festive. It may be baking, writing holiday cards, making gingerbread houses, or playing games.^[11]

- You can have multiple days like this at home with your kids. If you have multiple kids, let them each have a night where they choose what to do.

Method 3 of 3: Avoiding a Materialistic Mindset



1 Consider changing the way you give presents. If you think your kids are too focused on gifts and the materialistic side of the holidays, then you may want to give gifts in a different way. You can set a limit on how many gifts your kids get each. You can outline these expectations at the beginning of the holiday season so they are aware of the limited gifts.^[12]

- Focus more on doing things together and making memories than on gifts. Don't make shopping part of the family traditions. Instead, focus on being together.
- Make homemade gifts with your family. This could be picture frames, art projects, or other crafts.
- If your kids are old enough, talk to them about marketing and the capitalistic way companies use the holidays. Discuss the idea of getting too many presents or things we don't need.



2 Volunteer. Another way to help make the holidays meaningful is to help your kids volunteer in some way. Giving back to the community can help your children spread the spirit of the holidays.^[13]

- You and your kids can volunteer at soup kitchens to serve dinner for those less fortunate.
- Get creative and make cards for local nursing homes or homeless shelters. You can also make cards to send overseas to those in the military.
- Organize a visit to a nursing home or senior center. Your children can sing Christmas carols, give out cards, or help decorate.
- Get your kids to go through their toys and fill a box of things they don't want anymore to give to a local organization that helps those less fortunate.



3 Give back in some way together. The holidays are a great time to help others. Ask your child to choose an organization or cause to donate to. This might be donating toys, clothes, or food to local donation drives. You might adopt a family to provide a Christmas for the children. As you do this together, make sure to talk about why you are doing it and the importance of giving back to the community.^[14]

- Some organizations allow you to donate money or gifts for families in other countries. If your child loves animals, you can donate to animal shelters or animal organizations.
- You can encourage your child to drop money in donation buckets outside stores that you pass.

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