



3 Tips for Joy in Holiday Chaos

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My two-year-old woke up too early (again!), my coffee cream had soured, I hit my head on the car door, and the house was already a mess at 8am. It's days like this that joy is more of a choice than a feeling. On my way to take my daughter to preschool I found myself wanting to complain to someone about the rough start to my morning. Instead, I chose to let my thoughts focus on the Father. His love and grace far supersede any hiccup in my plans.

How we feel is important, but focusing more on life's challenges than turning to Jesus and laying it at His feet can lead to being easily overwhelmed. The holiday season, specifically with young children, can lead to this feeling, among many others. I'll outline a few tips that may encourage you to choose and experience joy throughout this chaotic and wonderful season.

Schedule

Having a consistent schedule is so important for children. Consistent bed and mealtimes help children have a sense of safety and security. This is especially true during the holidays. My family travels often on holidays as I'm sure many of yours do. I've found that keeping my 2-year-old daughter's nap and bedtime the same no matter whose house or what time zone we are on really makes a difference! This may not be as necessary with older children but little ones really benefit. I know grandma wants to take her to look at lights and everyone wants her to come to the late dinner at a restaurant but we have learned that it's okay to prioritize her schedule. She won't be little for very long and she will soon be more flexible. It's okay and very healthy to communicate your child's individual needs to others.

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HOURS OF OPERATION

Monday through Thursday, 8 am to 8 pm

Friday, 8 am to 5 pm

Saturday by appointment

Acorn Counseling Education Services

Working to strengthen families, children, and the community

Christy Graham, President of ACES

Encouragement

Encouragement, noticing a specific positive action, can be the most powerful tool of a parent. Unfortunately, many times we confuse Encouragement with Praise. Praise is noticing a specific action that is desired by one in authority. There is a place for praise, as it can teach a child to meet the adult's expectations, but encouragement can help a child to meet their own expectations. So watch this month for times when you see your child struggling with something hard. Notice the struggle and encourage them:

That's hard, but you aren't giving up! You did it and it wasn't easy! You did that just the way you wanted to!

Giving encouragement gives attention to the things you adore about your kids. It can grow and nurture the very qualities that you can't wait to see in them as adults: self-control, perseverance, patience, integrity.

Need other kinds of helpful hints? Join our Facebook Parenting Party December 16th to help connect our counselors to our community.



¹Taken from Vivian Nichols' JuicePlus+ FB group. Need inspiration? Email her at vivian.nichols@yahoo.com.

Christy and Ashley will be on Facebook on December 16th at 9 pm for our Facebook Parenting Party! Sign up today!

Relatives

It's common around the holidays to visit relatives that you may not see as often. While my husband and I were thrilled to see my husband's grandfather over Thanksgiving, my daughter was not as sure. We don't see him very often so he is essentially a stranger to her. Instead of forcing her to hug, kiss, talk to, or sit on his lap, we give her space to make her own relationship with him. We talk about him before visiting and our demonstration of love and relationship with him help her to see he is a trusted adult. By the end of the day, she was talking to and playing games with him. I believe it's very important to respect the boundaries our little ones have and pay attention to their emotional needs. A wise adult will recognize the child is not being disrespectful but forging a relationship on their own, which is an amazing and valuable skill!

Fun

Fun! Yes, FUN! I find myself focused on laundry, what in the world to make for dinner, and all of the other lesser important tasks of life that seem to stack up in my mind like the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Fun doesn't make my to-do list as often as I'd like. I'm working on changing that. I live in a house that really values humor and laughter, but often I find myself too "busy" to really enjoy it. I am looking for opportunities to take myself less seriously as a wife, a mom, and a person! One thing I'm doing is choosing time in the day to PLAY with my daughter. Not hanging out doing dishes or cooking while she plays and calling it quality time, but truly getting involved with what she's doing, following her lead, and having fun! I'm using funny voices, letting her choose my clothes, and dancing like a crazy person. It helps my joy be more evident to my family when I more relaxed. And I've also found it impossible to maintain a frown when dancing :)

So, this holiday season, have some fun! Your family won't remember that toy that you waited in line for, the dinner meticulously planned, or the gorgeous decorations as much as they will remember the joy you spread to them and others!

If you have any questions or would like to meet to talk more about this or anything else in your life, I'd love to meet you. Please call or email me anytime! (940)222-8703 ext 701 ashley@acorncounseling.services



Ashley is one of our lead therapists. She also has a small child, a husband, and a black belt in Tae Kwon Do.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Facebook Parenting Party

@ Acorn Counseling Education Services FB Page

DECEMBER 16TH 9:00 PM TO 9:30 PM

Join us on Facebook for a party to talk about Parenting. Our topic this month is how to get through the holidays with complicated families. Simply click on the Events page of the site and comment and ask questions. *Please remember this is for education purposes and is not a substitute for counseling. Also, Facebook is not private so be thoughtful in your questions and comments.

Green Apple Therapy Q and A

@ 1430 Robinson Road #430 Corinth, Texas 76210

DECEMBER 16TH 2:00 PM TO 3:00 PM

Join us in our kitchen to talk with Courtney, a lead therapist with Green Apple Therapy. We are focusing on giving mental health providers more information on speech, occupational, and physical therapy for preschoolers. Interested? RSVP with Christy at Christy@acorncounseling.services.

7 Principles for Making Marriage Work

Laura Westbrook, LPC Intern will lead a group for couples based on the highly researched Gottman Method. Contact Laura for more information at 940-222-8703 ext 703.

Child Parent Relationship Training

Christy Graham, LPC S RPT S will lead a group of parents in the most exciting, highly researched, Denton created, group that teaches parents play therapy skills to use with their children. Contact Christy for more information at 940-222-8703 ext 700. \$500 per person.

Christy, Laura, and Ashley are accepting new clients. Call today to find out how they can help you and your family become stronger and closer!

In case of inclement weather, we will abide by DISD unless you are specifically *contacted* by your therapist. If in doubt, call the office at 940-222-8703.

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