

Less Yelling and More Joy for the Holidays

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Have you noticed that you're yelling more and your stress level is rising this holiday season? With shopping to do, finances to balance, and the kids' high energy, chances are you're under more pressure.

Most parents don't want to yell, but there are many things that trigger a harsh response towards children. If you're tired, hungry, stressed, or frustrated, you may find that you have trouble controlling your emotions, and yelling becomes an automatic way to respond. There are things you can do to learn to yell less.

Reduce your stress:

- If you're doing too much, decide what's most important to you and your family, and cut out some activities. Get enough sleep, and discover ways to relax. Exercise on a regular basis, eat well, and don't skip meals. Take care of yourself.

Make a decision to yell less:

- Think about why this goal is important to you and your family? Did you like it when your parents yelled? Are your children acting out or seem more distant? Do you miss having a calm household?
- Come up with a plan that has specific components.
 - Start small. Tell your family that when you feel your stress level rise you will "take five" and go into your room for a break.
 - Identify the roadblocks that make it difficult to change. Perhaps you're not getting enough help from your spouse or older children.
 - Get support and ask for help. Your sister has been offering to baby-sit, maybe now is the time to take her up on it.

Work on an Anger Log:

- The first step to change is to observe what gets you upset. A log will help you see under what circumstances you are more likely to yell. Is there a time of day you yell more? Are you usually at home or in the car when your yelling starts? What kinds of behaviors trigger you, and how does it make you feel?
- Do an anger log for at least a week so you'll know more about your yelling pattern. Reflect on your reactions.
- Imagine a camera in your home taking a picture of you while you're yelling. What do you see?
- Be kind to yourself as you observe your patterns. The fact that you are reading this means that you're a caring parent.
- Take some deep breaths before you respond to your child. If you're about to yell, excuse yourself, and reflect on what you want to accomplish. See if you can discipline in respectful way. Love with limits is the direction to go towards. Letting children know what you expect and following up with a consequence will often work towards reducing yelling.

Enjoy the time you spend with your family. The greatest gift you can give them is a house with harmony, love, and the smell of something good cooking on the stove.

Resource: *Kids, Parents, and Power Struggles* by Mary Sheedy Kurcinka