

Monthly Newsletter

FAMILY TIMES

VOL. 2 ISSUE 4 • DEC 2022



Moore Public Schools
MENTAL HEALTH TEAM



Caregiver Corner

by Rendy Janssen, LMFT

The holiday season can occasionally bring up some negative feelings for caregivers. For adults, holidays can trigger grief, sadness from family dysfunction that you experienced in your family of origin, guilt about not being able to give your child things they want for Christmas and more.

It is important that as caregivers, you give yourself space to experience whatever feelings may come up around the holidays. Acknowledging stressors can allow you to have room for positive and happy emotions as well. If you begin to feel overwhelmed take 3 deep breaths, identify your current emotion as well as what may be causing you stress/tension in the moment. Allow yourself permission to let go of the stress and embrace the joy of the moment.

Keep expectations for the holiday low—everything doesn't have to be perfect in order for it to be quality time that is enjoyed.

Community Events

by Elizabeth Asplin, CTRS/L

December

2nd- 3rd **The Santa Market: OKC Fairgrounds**

3rd **Cowboy Christmas Parade: Historic Stockyards City OKC, 10:00am**

17th- 18th **The Oklahoma Nutcracker: Nancy O'Brian Center for Performing Arts, Norman, \$20+ Per seat.**



Mental Health Discussion

By Summer King, LPC & LADC/MH

Gifts and Mental Health with Children:

Around holidays there is often significant pressure put on parents that can impact their own mental health and confidence in parenting. To be a good parent and to preserve your family's mental health, do you need to buy several gifts? Definitely not; remember showering your kids with gifts isn't necessary for good parenting. Around the holiday season remember the most important gifts include:

Love and affection: Letting your kids know they are loved and openly showing affection are more meaningful and lasting than the latest toy.

Involvement: Attending your kids' holiday programs, signing up for community events, volunteering as a family to help others.

Understanding: It is okay for kids to want the latest gifts, but it is also okay for you to be choosy about what you do buy them and to communicate with your children appropriately.

Additional studies have shown that often when children have too many toys they may be more easily distracted and can be easily overwhelmed. Focusing on what is important in your family and building connection may be the best gifts for the mental well being of your entire family.

Source: [Does Good Parenting During the Holidays Mean Buying Gifts? | HealthyPlace](#) and

[Too many toys are bad for children, study suggests - Activematters](#)



Family Connections

By Elizabeth Asplin, CTRS/L

Cookie Decorating: Turn on those ovens and warm up your homes with some holiday fun! Make homemade sugar cookies or store bought and decorate them with your family.

Board Games: Get your board games out and have a family game night! This is a great way to build connections with your children. Playing board games teaches children how to play with others appropriately and gives them the opportunity to practice regulation skills when losing.

Looking at Lights: There are plenty of beautiful light shows around the great cities of Oklahoma. Hop in the car and go to the city, bundle up and go walk around the neighborhood and admire the bright lights and fun decorations.



Academic Tools to Support Learning

By Katy Creecy, MSW, LCSW

The latest research on the brain indicates that consistent exposure to music boosts academic and social-emotional skills, including language, reading ability, memory, attention, and social cohesion. You can start with something fun like a family dance party or karaoke night. Create a family playlist with everyone's favorites. Listen to different kinds of music with your kids while drawing

pictures guided by the music or writing words and phrases inspired by the music. Clap, stomp, or drum a rhythm and have everyone repeat. Create songs to sing together while going through daily routines (e.g., preparing meals, getting ready for bed). All these fun activities are creating and strengthening pathways in the brain to help kids be successful academically and socially. Sources: Edutopia, Reading Rockets



Play helps build a warm relationship between family members and create a bank of positive feelings and experiences that can be drawn upon in times of conflict. Through play, you can help your children solve problems, test out ideas, and explore their imaginations."

— Carolyn Webster-Stratton

D.I.F.Y– Do It For Yourself

by Davene Findlay-Williams, MSW, LCSW

Taking Care of Yourself During the Holidays

Often, busy parents put themselves last and are short-changed without time to recharge and renew during the holidays. The following tips are some ways to enhance self-care either solo or in tandem with other family members:

- Take time out each day for a few minutes of alone time/me time. When adults model that this is an essential part of life then they send the message that respite is important, just like work.
- Breathe—just breathe. It sounds so silly to be reminded of something obvious but in times of stress the breathing often becomes erratic and escalates a sense of loss of control. Controlling one’s breath with a simple activity like breathe in, hold for four counts, breathe out, and hold for four counts can generate a sense of control and tranquility. Make it a family activity.
- Find time to demonstrate moving empathy to compassion. Compassion is the willingness to shift towards action in relationship to kindness or thoughtfulness towards others. It isn’t difficult to find others in need but sometimes it can be tough to find other families who share similar concerns.
- Take time to be mindful. Mindfulness, or noticing the present with kindness and curiosity, is effective in creating a sense of



peace and calm. Whether you have a formal mindfulness practice like meditation or an informal practice like intentional walking, there remains a focus on what is happening in the here-and-now. Delighting in the seasonal sounds and tastes, savoring the scents, and paying attention to natural surroundings heightens awareness and slows the pace of life.

Source: nagc.org (National Association for Gifted Children)



Progressive Muscle Relaxation

by Elizabeth Asplin, CTRS/L

- Take 3 deep breathes, inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth.
- Starting with your lowest part of your body, squeeze or tense your feet for 5 seconds. Then release and relax.
- Continue to work your way up your body squeezing/tensing each body part (Leg, stomach, shoulders, arms, and hands) for 5 seconds and then releasing/relaxing.
- Finish out with squeezing/tensing your whole body for 5 seconds and then releasing/relaxing the body.
- Take 3 deep breathes, inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth.

PIZZA SLIDERS



Ingredients:

- 12 slider rolls , cut in half
- 1/4 cup marinara sauce, more for dipping
- 1/2 cup mozzarella cheese, shredded
- 1/4 cup sliced pepperoni, about 24 thin slices
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter , melted
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon fine sea salt

Directions:

- 1.Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line a baking sheet with aluminum foil for easy clean up.
 - 2.Place bottoms of rolls on the baking sheet. Spread marinara sauce evenly over rolls. Top with pepperoni slices, other desired toppings and mozzarella cheese.
 - 3.Place tops back onto sliders.
 - 4.Whisk together melted butter with garlic powder, Italian seasoning, black pepper and fine sea salt.
 - 5.Baste over the tops of your sliders.
 - 6.Bake, uncovered, for 7-10 minutes.
 - 7.Remove and serve immediately.
- <https://www.savoryexperiments.com/pizza-sandwich-sliders/#wprm-recipe-container-56387>

Privacy and Security Best Practices

By Taylor Wright, LPC-NCC

Like with most things, starting a conversation around safety and privacy online and through social media early is important and can help negate many challenges and obstacles your child might face as their online presence grows as they get older. This conversation can start in early childhood and hopefully will continue through many conversations all the way through early adulthood. Speaking often in short conversations about safety and security with your child makes the topic less taboo and more likely for your child to be comfortable in bringing up issues or challenges they might be facing online. "It may not be realistic for parents to become experts on every new app that becomes popular," says Stephen Balkam, the founder and C.E.O. of the Family Online Safety Institute, "but by establishing an open conversation with their child from the start, they can help them stay safe. Children who are used to talking about what they do online are more likely to tell someone if they are worried or upset by something that happens in their digital life."

A couple of common topics that you could get started with talking to your child about could be:

- 1.What goes online stays online, meaning if there is something you want to share with someone but not with everyone then it should not be shared online. Once it is out there, it really cannot be truly removed and you lose control of who might see or read it.
- 2.Never to share personal, identifiable, or sensitive information for physical safety reasons and for potential scams.

F.O.S.I.'s online safety cards for kids' technology can help you set up the ground rules for your children when you give them a new device.

Source: [How and When to Limit Kids' Tech Use](#)

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