CAN THE HOLIDAYS BE A TRIGGER FOR MY CHILD’S DEPRESSION?

By Ben Mahoney

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https://discoverymood.com/blog/can-holiday-season-trigger childs-depression/

Just like adults, children and teenagers often exhibit signs of stress around the holidays. If a child is known to have depression, the holidays can be triggering. Children are like sponges; they can absorb the stress and anxiety from others around them and will react to their parents’ stress. Many kids will feel anxious about going to a different daycare or childcare during Christmas break and may feel overwhelmed with finishing all their vacation homework during the long holiday break. Additionally, many children may feel sad because their parents are not in the position to spend money on presents this year. This can create a lot of social anxiety upon the return to school when many other kids are showing off their new Christmas toys and clothes.

Holiday blues versus depression
The holiday blues is a temporary undefined condition that commonly presents with a sad mood around the holidays. Many children and adults can feel overwhelmed and feel a sense of loss around the holidays. However, many people who think they may have the holiday blues can actually have depression, which is a serious mood disorder that can result in negative and harmful behaviors in both adults and children.

Sadness, feeling of guilt and loneliness, a loss of interest, changes in sleep and appetite, decreased energy, a decline in school performance and social isolation are all signs and symptoms associated with depression in children.

How to talk to your children about depression around the holidays
- Start by asking them if anything is bothering them and explain that you have noticed a change in their mood lately.
- Explain that the holidays can be a stressful time for everyone.
- Ask if there is something you can do to make their holiday better.
- If there is an obvious trigger, like a major life transition, give reassurance to your child and recognize and respect their triggers.
- Keep an open dialogue and remember that listening is usually better than talking.
- Start a simple holiday tradition, like taking a walk to look at Christmas lights.
- Seek family therapy if these simple steps don’t show improvement.
- Be open to antidepressant medications and different types of psychotherapy.

More Resources Available
https://sites.google.com/hebisd.edu/family-resources/home
Boundaries for the Holiday Season

Brene Brown, a research professor at the University of Houston, defines healthy boundaries as “simply our lists of what’s okay and not okay.” It is essential to understand what healthy boundaries mean so you can practice setting boundaries this holiday season. This can help you find peace within yourself and help you avoid uncomfortable situations and feelings.

Put up a wall but also open a door: “I can’t do _____ but I would be willing to _____ instead.”

Clarity is kind & helpful: “I need to take some space for my own well being.”

You don’t need to justify: “No thank you.”

Gratitude does a long way: “Thank you for the invite. I won’t be able to make it.”

Anonymous Reporting

Crisis Text Line

If your child is suicidal an assessment for level of risk can be done at one of these:

Cook Children’s Behavioral Health (Ages 3-17)
801 7th Ave, Fort Worth, TX 76104
(682) 885-3917

JPS - Trinity Springs (Ages 13-17 & 18 Up)
1500 S. Main St. Fort Worth, TX 76104
(817) 702-3636

Basepoint Academy (Ages 11-18)
3900 Arlington Highlands Blvd, Suite 237
Arlington, TX 76018
469-771-1753

Mesa Springs Hospital
(Ages 12 and Up thru Adult)
Ft Worth Office: 817-841-8002
Northwest Office: 682-593-6001

Texas Health Behavioral Health Center Arlington
1001 N Waldrop Drive Suite 510
Arlington, TX 76012
(Ages 13 Up, Thru Adult)
(682) 549-7916

Texas Springwood Behavioral Health HEB
Walk-in hours: Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.
2717 Tibbets Drive Bedford, TX 76022
682-626-8719

suicide risk assessments are provided by mental health professionals to determine level of risk and provide treatment recommendations