

Helping Children Cope With the Winter Blues

The holidays are a whirlwind of fun and activity. The lights, packages, parties, new toys – it's certainly a most wonderful time of year. But starting in January, children often feel a let down as life returns to a routine of school, homework, ordinary family life, and the winter blahs. Silvana Clark, author of "Parent-Tested Ways to Grow Your Child's Confidence" (Meadowbrook Press), offers the following ways to help your child cope with the winter blues.

- Spend a few minutes discussing feelings. Say something like, "Wow! Wasn't it fun to have all your cousins over last week? What's it feel like now that all the activities are over?" Letting a child verbalize feelings can help put things in perspective.
- Plan low-cost activities. Suggest the family have a game night every Tuesday or eat dinner by candlelight. Leftover holiday candles at the breakfast table can create a warm cozy feeling to start the day.
- Encourage children to think about others. Food banks and homeless shelters experience a dramatic drop-off in donations after the holidays. Find ways children can help by donating toys, serving meals or visiting with nursing home residents. Thinking of others is a great way to build your child's confidence by putting emphasis on other people.
- Spend "floor time" with your child. Sit on the floor and let your child direct the activity. While it is difficult not to say, "Let's use the blocks to build a garage," keep quiet and simply respond to your child. Braid doll hair, race cars, or color in a traditional coloring book. The point is to give your child undivided attention doing what they want.
- Increase child's physical activity. In most parts of the country, we have a tendency to stay inside during cold weather. Take walks around the neighborhood. Experience the exhilaration of riding bikes on a gloomy winter day. Go to a local park and feed the ducks, even if it is raining. That's what umbrellas are for, isn't it?

The additional physical activity lessens the amount of time watching TV and the entire family benefits from old-fashioned fresh air and exercise. – Courtesy FeatureSource

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