

Solutions is a parent newsletter published by ESS during the school year. Each issue highlights an important topic related to children's mental health and provides practical applications for parents in the home environment.

HOLIDAY SAFETY PLANNING

Most of our students are anxiously awaiting winter break to experience some relief from the stress of homework, tests and school projects. We share in their excitement about holiday celebrations with family and friends, but we also provide them with the tools to manage their free time successfully. Although the thought of a vacation is exciting, the lack of structure, predictability and a daily routine can sometimes heighten stress levels. So, to this end, the clinical staff is meeting with the students to help them identify and plan for the stressors that they might encounter during their time away from school.

As parents, your stress level is probably escalating too because of the extra chores involved in preparing a special holiday for your family. There is also the added pressure of ensuring that your child maintains emotional stability and safety during their increased hours of "freedom." Effective School Solutions would like to provide some guidelines for you to minimize stress and maximize the health and safety of your son or daughter.

COMMUNICATE

1. Share your expectations and plans for the week with each other.
2. Discuss a Safety Plan with your child to ensure that everyone is prepared to manage episodes of acute depression, anxiety, or self-harm thoughts and behaviors. Be mindful of your own child's signs and symptoms of distress, of who their support system is, what activities are helpful to decrease their distress, and how to reach out for professional help when necessary.
3. Encourage them to tell you if they experience an increase in anxiety or depression to avoid a crisis.

MAINTAIN A ROUTINE

1. Encourage a healthy sleep routine.
2. Schedule at least one nutritious family meal every day.
3. Schedule some family activities whenever possible.
4. Negotiate internet access usage.

5. Discourage isolation and physical inactivity
6. Establish a reasonable holiday curfew.
7. Continue monitoring your child's medication compliance.
8. Keep alcohol, medication and potentially dangerous chemicals and objects under lock and key to minimize the danger to potentially impulsive and high risk children.

HOUSE RULES

1. Enforce the zero tolerance rule for substance use
2. Insist on knowing your child's whereabouts and companions
3. Monitor their party invitations to ensure the presence of adult supervision

SELF CARE

1. Spend time with friends
2. Spend time alone each day
3. Prioritize the activities that make you happy
4. Be creative / flexible about social activities you can work around your child's needs
5. Schedule time each day to talk to another adult
6. Allow yourself to cry
7. Find things that make you laugh
8. Find a way to have a weekly date with your partner
9. Say no to extra responsibilities

PARENTS MATTER: *The greatest gift you can give your children is your relationship with them.*