

# Gearing up for the holidays: Long-range planning

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**THE HOLIDAYS ARE ABOUT TO HAPPEN.** Now is the time to think about the last three months of the year. This “most wonderful time of the year” brings with it high expectations—and too often these expectations can take the enjoyment out of the coming season. When family members have attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (AD/HD), holiday tensions can be dramatically increased. It doesn't have to be so. With some forethought and advance planning, you can have a special and enjoyable holiday season.

## ► **Holiday time off**

Most adults will receive Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's days off, while students can expect entire weeks surrounding the holidays out of school. October is a good time to review your vacation allotment. You may need to submit requests for days off in advance, so now could be the time to do that. Plan what days you will need for travelling or holiday preparation and make your requests early enough to be eligible for those days.

## ► **Plan your work and be willing to adjust**

Often there are tasks and errands that need to be accomplished before the holidays. Plan now when you will handle these tasks and place them on the calendar. Break bigger chores into smaller steps and divide them up during the course of a couple weeks.

## ► **Travel plans**

One of my favorite holiday songs includes the line “ho, ho, ho and a bottle of rum—Santa's run off to the Caribbean.” If you plan to travel for the holidays, too, once you've cleared the time off with human resources and made your budget, book those travel arrangements early. Generally, the best deals can be found when hotel, car-rental, and airline reservations are made well in advance of your travel dates. Waiting until November or even December might make them too costly for your budget, or they might simply be booked

up by then. The same goes for students flying home for the holidays. Find out when classes end and resume, so you can make travel arrangements now.

## ► **Holiday budget**

A financial budget is a concern for anyone at this time of year, and more so for the adult and/or parent dealing with AD/HD. Budgeting time is equally important, since many people with AD/HD have difficulties judging how long a task will take to accomplish. Both concerns can be addressed in the same manner: Determine what purchases need to be made or tasks to be done and how much money/time you have available. Enlist the aid of a friend, relative or coach if necessary, but write down specific expenses and/or tasks and plan how you will spend your money and time. By sticking to this plan, you will accomplish what needs to be done and not overspend or go into financial debt.

## ► **Delegate**

While you're jotting down the things that are important and the tasks that need to be accomplished, consider with whom you can share the holiday preparations, such as Thanksgiving dinner. Can a teenager help get the front yard ready? Can a middle school student be responsible for vacuuming during the coming weeks? Can your aunt bake pumpkin pies and your brother bring the turkey and stuffings for the family dinner? Remember,

you do not have to do everything on your own to create a special holiday. It will be a wonderful celebration when many members of the family can chip in with preparations.

## ► **Create family traditions**

Children don't remember gifts; they remember family traditions. Creating family traditions that are meaningful and work for your family is what counts. Take your family's abilities, needs, and interests into consideration and pick the traditions and activities that fit your time and budget and that your family will enjoy. Less is more when it comes to the things that fulfill us during the holidays.

## ► **Shop early and during off-hours**

Gift shopping seems so far away; after all, it's October. Finding the cutest ceramic pumpkin and those great orange lights seem like a higher priority right now. But making your list and starting to shop in October and early November can have advantages, like finding more sales and avoiding crowds. Give yourself more time to think about gift-giving, rather than grabbing last-minute gifts in a panic. And if you'd like to exchange an item for something else later, you have time to go back and do that. Shopping can be accomplished in AD/HD-friendly spurts. Don't try to do one big shopping trip; instead, break the task into smaller outings that are less stressful for you or your child. 🍎