Overcoming Holiday Brain Drain

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Presents have been unwrapped, leftovers have been eaten, decorations have been put away…You have survived another hectic holiday season! So what’s going on with the kids? Have you noticed that the kids are cranky during and especially after the holidays? Are their brains now a mush and are they dreading the return to school?

The reality is that the holiday season is a major emotional roller coaster, especially for kids. Think about all the excitement and anticipation that kids have experienced during this time– writing a hopeful letter (fingers and toes crossed!) to Santa with their wish list, on-the-go activities like Christmas tree shopping and decorating the home, ice skating and drinking hot chocolate. Of course, there’s holiday shopping, attending traditional winter performances or recitals, watching new-release movies…not to mention the waiting and waiting for Christmas Day to open presents and the anticipation (or dread) of family get-togethers and holiday feasts!

And then everything comes to an abrupt halt.

What if the solution to overcoming holiday brain drain is moderation? Pacing your activities so that kids don't crash from an emotional high would be a great way to overcome holiday brain drain. Here are some examples:

Practice the "Twelve Days of Christmas" Idea

In the traditional Christmas song "The Twelve Days of Christmas," the true love gives one gift a day, culminating in the largest and grandest gift on the last day. Having your kids open one gift a day during the holidays will keep the excitement of opening gifts ongoing, but not over-the-top. Not only will they will be able to play with and appreciate each gift by itself one day at a time, they practice delayed gratification.

Reinforce an Attitude of Gratitude

Have your kids write one thank you card for each gift received, also one day at a time. Teach them to be genuine in their thanks, seeking out unique characteristics of the gift and of the gift giver for which to be thankful. Writing one card a day is way less stressful than writing a whole bunch at a time! Writing thank you cards gives kids closure; a clear, mental signal that the holiday season is ending.

Keep Up with Academic Activities

During the holiday season, continue the habit of reading for twenty minutes a day. Make sure your kids are reading a variety of non-fiction and fiction texts. Do they have a favorite online math game they like to play? Or perhaps there’s a particular science exploration program they like to watch? Or give your kids a bunch of craft supplies and let their brains get creative!

What are some other ways you moderate activities so your kids don’t get holiday brain drain?

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