

## How to Deal with Holiday Stress

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Don't let the holidays get you down! The holidays provide a wonderful time to be with your family and loved ones, but don't be surprised or feel guilty if you get a little stressed. Here are some tips to help take the holidays one step at a time so you can enjoy those special moments.

### **Be your own cheerleader.**

The holidays are a lot of work, and sometimes our loved ones forget to thank us for all we do. Remember to pat yourself on the back when you've done something you're proud of, and cut yourself a little slack when you slip up. You teach your kids and grandkids to be proud of themselves – so take your own advice!

### **Put yourself on your list of loved ones.**

Taking care of you can be harder than you'd think, but remember to watch your nutrition, sleep and exercise. If you take care of yourself you will feel better, have more energy and be able to enjoy your friends and family that much more.

### **Practice saying “no” sometimes.**

The holidays can be a time of overindulgence for everyone, which is okay, but remember that it's good to set limits. Your grandkids will appreciate having some extra TV time, holiday cookies, and new toys even more if you practice a little restraint, and place limits on such activities.

### **Give each other downtime.**

Downtime is a chance for relaxation and imagination, which you and your grandkids need! Try not to feel guilty when you're preparing a holiday feast, or taking a nap. Everybody needs a break sometimes and these are great times for kids to learn how to self-entertain. Look inside for some holiday craft ideas that kids can enjoy by themselves or with the whole family.

### **Break the guilt habit of “should-ing.”**

Try to replace thoughts like “*I should be with so and so*”, with “*This is who I am with, and it's ok.*” This can help you get through the holidays with less stress, and help you enjoy the people you are with even more.

### **Expect the best.**

Do your best to make positive prophecies for this holiday season. Positive thought is a powerful thing and can also be self-fulfilling. Worrying about what may or may not happen is natural, but anxious worrying only adds stress to your life. Try to focus on the positive in your life, and worry about the negative only when you have to.

# Tips For Helping Children Before and After Parental Visitation

A visit with your grandchild's parent can be an exciting but sometimes stressful time for both you and your grandchild. Here are a few things to keep in mind and some tips to try and make you both feel more comfortable.

## ***Reasons why your grandchild may become stressed before and after a visit:***

- Your grandchild may be looking forward to seeing the parent, but overwhelmed with emotion as well.
- Your grandchild may be fearful that going on a visit means never returning to your home.
- Your grandchild might be reliving the trauma of being separated from the parent.
- The parent might not pay enough attention to the child because of personal issues, but the child may feel responsible.
- The parent may explain the situation differently than you have, and this can create confusion and stress for your grandchild.

## ***Before the visit:***

- Do your best to put your personal issues with the child's parent on hold. If you must address an issue with the parent, try not to do so in front of the child.
- Help your grandchild pick out what to wear to the visit, and perhaps bring something from home that could add to the child's comfort level (e.g., a stuffed animal or blanket).
- Help your grandchild make a picture or something to bring as a gift to the parent.
- Remind your grandchild that you will be there for support, before and after the visit.
- When possible bring your grandchild to and from the visit yourself.
- Many young children don't deal with a disruption in daily routine well, so make sure the visit is scheduled around your grandchild's schedule ( i.e., not too late in the day, not during school, not during nap time).
- Send a nutritious snack with your grandchild.

## ***After the visit:***

- Do your best to stay calm before, during and after the visit. The more comfortable you appear, the more secure your grandchild will feel.
- Plan some simple "re-entry" rituals. For example, unpack the backpack, have a snack, play a game, or do something that will make the child feel like this was a normal day.
- Be warm and welcoming upon their return from the visit. Expect that your grandchild will need time to readjust, and talk about how the child feels about seeing the parent.
- Mark the next visit date on the calendar with your grandchild so they feel involved and know what to expect.

*Information provided by: [www.aap.org/fostercare](http://www.aap.org/fostercare)*

## Safety Updates: Common Pediatric Safety Topics

Health and safety recommendations for children are constantly evolving, and it's important to stay up to date with what is current. According to the *AAP 2011 American Community Survey*, there are approximately 2.87 million grandparents raising grandchildren. Grandparent caregivers are experienced when it comes to caring for children, but need to be aware that there have been changes in safety practices since the last time they parented. AAP surveyed grandparents on common pediatric safety topics for children. Listed below are several of the questions AAP asked which cover some of the most relevant changes.

- **What is the best position for a baby to sleep in?**

In 1992 the AAP began recommending that babies sleep on their backs, and not their stomach or side. Since that recommendation the number of Sudden Infant Deaths (the number one cause of death among babies under one year) has decreased by half.

- **What should be in a crib with a baby?**

At one point bumpers, stuffed animals and blankets were considered acceptable crib accessories, but recent studies have shown that the safest crib contains only a mattress with a sheet.

- **What age should a baby start drinking water?**

The AAP and World Health Organization both recommend that babies are exclusively breastfed for the first six months. Breast milk may not be an option, so formula is acceptable, but no water.

- **How should a car seat be positioned?**

Times have changed, and so have car seats. The AAP advises that toddlers should be in a rear-facing car seat until they are two years of age, or until they outgrow the maximum height and weight for a particular car seat. AAP also recommends that most children should ride in a booster seat until they are 4' 9" and/or they are between eight and 12 years old.

*Information provided by: <https://aap.confex.com/aap/2012/webprogrampress/Paper17137.html>*



# **NEWS FOR GRG FACILITATORS:**

## **Tips for Starting and Sustaining a Support Group**

*-Mara Vannatta & Debbie Albin*

One year ago, when we took over facilitating the Bozeman GRG support group, we had a few goals for the group. First, we wanted to create and sustain an atmosphere of trust and camaraderie. Second, we wanted to bring in an educational component, and third, we wanted to grow the group membership. We are happy to report that the Bozeman group has more than doubled in size and some members are coming from over 50 miles away.

We'd like to share some of the techniques that have worked well for us in growing and sustaining the group.

### **Create a Welcoming, Comfortable and Safe Space to Share**

While GRG's may have more in common than they may know, how they deal and express their situations is different. First, help GRG's respect each other's circumstances by creating ground rules for the group. We like to start our first group by reminding them that our meetings are confidential and that nothing will be shared outside the group. Second, while some GRG's may have specific views and values and we remind our grandparents to respect everyone's values by not pressing their beliefs on others. In addition, we ask them to make sure everyone in the group has time to speak.

### **Ask for Feedback and Suggestions**

Begin the group series with a survey asking what each member wants to get out of the meetings and what kind of educational content they are looking for. End the series with an evaluation asking for feedback on all aspects of the group. (Note: the Bozeman group follows the academic year, beginning meetings in October and ending in May. If your group meets year-round, perhaps do the survey at the beginning of the new year and "check in" six months later with the evaluation.)

Bring a suggestion box to every meeting so members can express needs at any time. The box works great for members who may not want to make a suggestion to the whole group. We also encourage our members to contact us via email/phone with any private questions they do not wish to share with the group, but would like to be addressed in-group anonymously.

### **Advertise and Remind**

A few weeks before the group series begins, send postcards to area contacts and hang posters where GRG's will see them (library, school, food bank, medical services, family services, etc.).

Contact local news organizations such as newspapers and radio stations – ask for free advertising or, better yet, editorial content.

A few days before each meeting, give each member a reminder call or email.



### **Plan Meaningful – and Fun – Educational Content**

Refer to the initial surveys and plan content that is of interest to the majority of the group.

Pull together materials from many sources: Extension MontGuides, websites, books, magazine and journal articles, and YouTube videos.

Set aside at least 20-30 minutes of group time for content. Make this time interactive – bring a flipchart, encourage member feedback, break up into small groups, etc.

If your budget allows, occasionally pair the content with a small, relevant gift. We paired a discussion on stress with a bag of goodies designed to reduce stress – a yummy treat, a small puzzle, a stress ball, etc. And we paired a discussion on the emotional and legal importance of writing things down with a small journal.

### **Bring in Guest Presenters**

For topics that are important to the entire group, (again, refer to the initial survey) have a local expert come in with a presentation or Q&A session. Last year, we brought in a family practice attorney to discuss issues such as custody and guardianship and Extension FCS Specialist Marsha Goetting discussed wills and estate planning.

Give the group plenty of notice for guest presentations. Encourage them to submit questions ahead of time so the presenter knows what topics are most important to the group.

### **Materials Available for Group Facilitators**

Attention support group facilitators! The GRG Project's Bozeman office has many materials you'll find useful in advertising and implementing your groups.

- 4-color, tri-fold **brochure** describing the GRG Project with room on the back for your local contact information. There is also brochure available for Native American families.
- 4-color 11" x 17" **poster** with a large area for your local contact information.
- 12-page booklet listing Montana **services** valuable to your GRG's, including two pages just for Native American families.
- MSU Extension **MontGuides**. All Family & Human Development guides are on the GRG website and you can find all MontGuides at <http://www.msueextension.org/store/>
- Group Member Initial **Survey**.
- Group Member Final **Evaluation**.

Go to the GRG website at <http://www.montana.edu/wwwhd/grg.html> to see all these items.

Contact Debbie Albin at (406) 994-5099; [deborah.albin@montana.edu](mailto:deborah.albin@montana.edu) to order.

# HOLIDAY CRAFTS

## Pinecone Birdfeeder

*What you'll need:*

- A large pinecone
- Peanut butter
- Bird seed
- String
- Newspaper and a disposable plate
- A plastic knife

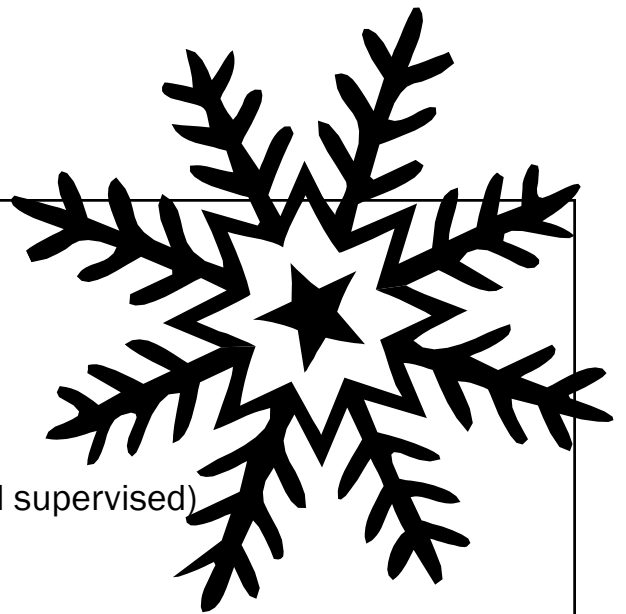
- Put down a sheet of newspaper, and use a disposable plate to minimize cleanup.
- Tie a piece of string to the top of the pinecone.
- Cover the pinecone in peanut butter using the plastic knife.
- Sprinkle the birdseed on the plate, and roll the peanut butter covered pinecone in it until covered. Refrigerate for one hour, take the pinecone by the string and hang it outside a window. Now the birds have a yummy winter snack, and you can watch and see what types of birds live near your house!



## Toothpick Snowflake

*What you'll need:*

- 8 toothpicks
  - 9 small pompoms
  - Craft glue or a hot glue gun (the glue gun works best, but only if kids are well supervised)
  - Ribbon or yarn
  - White paint
- 
- Start by painting the toothpicks white, and let them dry.
  - Glue a pompom to the pointed end of each toothpick.
  - One by one, carefully glue the blunt end of each toothpick to the center pompom, and let dry.
  - Carefully tie a piece of ribbon or yarn around one of the toothpicks near the pompom and you're ready to hang your snowflake!



# Grandfamily Support Contacts Across Montana

## Western Region

### **Flathead County—Kalispell**

Nikki Roth  
[nikki@nurturingcenter.org](mailto:nikki@nurturingcenter.org)  
The Nurturing Center, Inc.  
(406) 756-1414

### **Lake County—Ronan**

Nori Pearce  
MSU Extension  
(406) 676-4271

### **Lewis & Clark County—Helena**

Janet Coughlin  
Rocky Mountain Development  
Council, Head Start  
(406) 457-7308

### **Madison/Jefferson Counties—**

*Whitehall*  
Andrea Sarchet  
MSU Extension  
(406) 287-3282

### **Ravalli County—Hamilton**

Brenda Fisher  
Family Services  
(406) 363-1961 ext. 107

### **Ravalli County—Florence**

Allison Dunne  
WORD—Local Living Family Center  
(406) 273-0142

### **Silver Bow County—Butte**

Brenda Hergott  
Butte 4-C's  
(406) 723-4019  
1-800-794-4061

## Central Region

### **Cascade County—Great Falls**

Jona McNamee  
MSU Extension  
(406) 454-6980

Mariellen Ritts  
(406) 453-3554

### **Fergus County—Lewistown**

Denise Seilstad  
MSU Extension  
(406) 535-3919

### **Gallatin County—Bozeman**

MSU Extension Family &  
Human Development  
(406) 994-3395  
[grg@montana.edu](mailto:grg@montana.edu)

**Glacier County—Browning &  
Blackfeet Indian Reservation**  
Carrie Jackson/Connie Bremner  
Eagle Shield Center  
(406) 338-7257

### **Hill County—Havre**

Lea Ann Larson  
MSU Extension  
(406) 265-5481

### **Hill County—Rocky Boy**

*Indian Reservation*  
Mary St. Pierre  
Stone Child College &  
MSU Extension  
(406) 395-4875

### **Stillwater County—Columbus**

Lisa Terry  
MSU Extension  
(406) 322-8035

### **Teton County—Choteau**

Jane Wolery  
MSU Extension  
(406) 466-2491

## Eastern Region

### **Custer County—Miles City**

Don & Vivian Westall  
(406) 234-6727

### **Dawson County—Glendive**

Pete Bruno  
Family Life Institute  
(406) 939-5591

### **Roosevelt County—Culbertson**

Ardis Oelkers  
MSU Extension  
(406) 787-5312

### **Roosevelt County—Fort Peck**

*Indian Reservation*  
Carol Bemer  
(406) 768-2430

### **Rosebud County—Forsyth**

Jennifer Anderson  
MSU Extension  
(406) 346-7320

### **Rosebud & Big Horn Counties—**

*Northern Cheyenne Indian  
Reservation*  
Ryhal Rowland  
MSU Extension  
(406) 477-6498

### **Valley County—Glasgow**

Roubie Younkin  
MSU Extension  
(406) 228-6239

### **Yellowstone County—Billings**

Shaye Skovgaard  
MSU Extension  
(406) 256-2828



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**[www.msuextension.org](http://www.msuextension.org)**

Montana State University Extension is an  
ADA/EO/AA Veteran's Preference Employer  
and provider of educational outreach.

# Montana Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Project

**Call it a clan, call it a network,  
call it a tribe, call it a family.  
Whatever you are, who ever you are,  
you need one.**

***~Jane Howard***