

Christmas message

For our final newsletter for 2019 we would like to take the opportunity to wish you all a joyful, peaceful Christmas and a happy, restful and safe holiday.

We so look forward to the holidays, but in reality, it can be a crazy, stressful and overwhelmingly busy time. It can be tiring, lonely, financially difficult and, for many, emotionally painful. We have members of our own school community who are experiencing or have experienced loss and grief, relationship breakdowns, terminal and chronic illness, separation from loved ones, job loss and hardship and our thoughts and prayers are with you all.

One of the biggest challenges at this time of the year is to keep the focus on the really important things, namely, our relationships with each other. Gift your children with your time. It is the greatest thing. Spend precious time playing with them, relaxing with them, reading to them and letting them know how you love them. Every moment spent with your child is an investment in your relationship with them. Where possible engage them in the preparations for Christmas. Let them make cards and decorations, stir the pudding mix, decorate the Christmas biscuits, wrap the present for Nanna or write the gift tags. This can be a challenge when you are pushed for time and want everything to be 'just so', but being involved enhances your child's sense of belonging and connectedness to the family. It also builds self-esteem and fosters responsibility.



Christmas is the perfect opportunity to foster the joy of giving in your children. Let them choose a gift to take into the Giving Tree, your church or local charity. Allow them to use their own money if they suggest it. If not a gift, an act of kindness; visit an elderly relative or bake a cake for a neighbour. The act of giving helps your child find meaning and value in Christmas. It promotes happiness and helps your child to feel good about themselves.

Make a special effort to be 'in the present moment' with your family from time to time. This means trying to enjoy the time you spend together without racing ahead in your mind to the next five or so tasks you need to complete before the day is out. Meal times are a perfect time to practice this. Slow down when you can (and slow down when you can't, because that's when you really need to.)

The holidays are also the perfect time to practice the things we've talked about during the year; catching the children out being good, trying not to sweat the small stuff with your moody teenagers, practicing forgiveness and kindness, and performing those rituals and traditions together. Model the behaviours and the Christmas spirit you most want to see emulated in your children, for they will take your lead. Laugh a lot and love more.

Most importantly, speak your love. Christmas is the perfect time (although not the only) to tell our children how much we love and value them.

Finally, thank you for your support and feedback throughout the year. We hope you have found our articles useful and of interest, and look forward to continuing our blog next year.

Happy Christmas,

Andrea and Gai

A personal note from Andrea:

I thank you all for your readership and encouragement. I am retiring at the end of this year and so my role as Student Counsellor at St Mary's College has come to an end. I will miss working with you and your wonderful daughters and wish you all the very, very best for Christmas, the New Year and into the future.

Gai Bath and Andrea Maver

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