

## Connecting at Christmas Time

Christmas is the perfect time to both create special family time together and to think about and practise the rituals that make your family unique. Whether it's decorating the tree together, making a gingerbread house, attending midnight mass or delivering parcels to the Giving Tree, each family has its own unique way of coming and being together. Sometimes these rituals have been part of the extended family for many generations. Remember to tell the children where the rituals and traditions you follow have come from, and explain why you value them and what special memories they hold for you. This helps your children to create their own family history and special memories and strengthens their sense of family and belonging, (a very powerful panacea when things get tough in life).

Summer holidays are also a great time to kick back and have some fun together. With the stress of school out of the way (and hopefully a bit of leave from work for the parents) make the time to be together. Resist the urge to spend the entire holiday break catching up on household maintenance, painting and gardening. Down tools and play. Go for bike rides, picnics, have a day at the beach, a walk on the mountain or bake a cake together. Engage the children in the planning. Set boundaries and budgets as appropriate. You may be amazed with what they come up with. It doesn't have to cost money to have fun. Gift your children with your most precious commodity .... your time. We guarantee they will remember this longer than they will the gifts under the tree or the fresh paint in the hall way.

The relaxed time over the holidays may also be a time to better connect with your children and talk with them about values you want to instil. It's a good time to discuss issues relating to friendships that may have been obstacles and celebrate how these were overcome. A couple of articles we wrote covered friendships and one technique to use when confronting a friend about their behaviour being the use an "I" message. "I" messages simply begin with "I felt ..... when you....." and they safely allow the aggrieved person to communicate their feelings. This is a great technique to use when parenting too.

We would like to wish you all a very happy and restful Christmas and holiday break, and we look forward to an exciting and rewarding year to come.

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