

Ideas can help family enjoy true meaning of holidays

This year, we're trying to help our kids focus on the non-commercial, non-consumer aspects of Christmas, but we seem to be having trouble getting the message through to them. Any ideas?

First, you need to understand what you're up against. You might be saying all the right things, and you could be heroically consistent in your messages, but your kids are getting all sorts of counter-messages from television, our consumer culture and probably even from their peers.

Family and consumer scientists at the nation's land-grant universities, including Ohio State University, do offer guidance for parents to help them communicate with their children and instill family values, both during the holidays and at any time of year. Here are some ideas to consider:

• **Model the behavior you want to see from your children.** It's not enough to talk the talk. You need to walk the walk — and not at the shopping mall. It will do you no good to tell your children that Christmas should be about families spending quality time together if they see that you are overwhelmed with shopping, gift-wrapping and buying new decorations.

• **First listen, then ask questions.** Pay attention to what your children are saying. Don't be dismissive of their interests, concerns, thoughts and beliefs. Follow up by asking more about their perspectives on the holidays without giving them the third-degree.



• **Have fun together.** If you enjoy baking, decorating or volunteering during the holidays, ask your kids to join you. Find common interests, especially with teens, and make time to do those things together.

• **Think of creative ways to involve children with family traditions.** If visiting relatives, encourage them to do a video project to record family members' reminiscences about their favorite holiday memories.

Help younger children develop questions in advance, and let them take turns being the interviewer and camera operator. Or, if you have old family decorations and ornaments, they could record your memories of where they came from and why they're special. Still photos with a written memory for a scrapbook could work just as well as a video.

• **Simplify your schedule.** It's easy to overbook yourself and your family during the holidays. Try to be selective in invitations you accept and activities you plan. It's important to spend time together, but being involved in a lot of activities that require being at a certain place at a specified time can become stressful. Consider planning family activities at home that are more flexible — arrange for a family evening at home watching old Christmas movies, for example, or playing board games around the dining room table.

Family Fundamentals is a monthly column on family issues. It is a service of the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences and its outreach and research arms, Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Family Fundamentals, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1044, or filipic.3@osu.edu.



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION
OHIO AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH
AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER

**For the month of
December 2013**

By Martha Filipic
614-292-9833
filipic.3@osu.edu

Dear Subscriber: This column was reviewed by Carmen Irving, program specialist for Healthy Relationships for Ohio State University Extension, the outreach arm of Ohio State's College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences.

College Communications
2021 Coffey Road
Columbus, OH 43210-1043
614-292-2011

208 Research Services
Building
1680 Madison Ave.
Wooster, OH 44691-4096
330-263-3780

Ohio State University Extension embraces human diversity and is committed to ensuring that all research and related educational programs are available to clientele on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to age, ancestry, color, disability, gender identity or expression, genetic information, HIV/AIDS status, military status, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status. This statement is in accordance with United States Civil Rights Laws and the USDA. *Keith L. Smith, Associate Vice President for Agricultural Administration; Associate Dean, College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences; Director, Ohio State University Extension; and Gist Chair in Extension Education and Leadership. For Deaf and Hard of Hearing, please contact Ohio State University Extension using your preferred communication (e-mail, relay services, or video relay services). Phone 1-800-750-0750 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. EST Monday through Friday. Inform the operator to dial 614-292-6181.*