

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Holiday Celebrations with Young Children

In many families, plans for seasonal celebrations have already begun. Along with the happy expectation of a holiday gathering with family and friends come changes in our usual routine and often some pressure to meet deadlines. As the holidays draw closer, changes may include increased shopping trips, more time spent in the kitchen selecting and preparing just the right recipe, possibly re-arranging furniture to accommodate guests, and purchasing or getting holiday clothing ready for the special day or packing and planning for an anticipated trip.

Children are often affected by change. For young children especially, consistency of routine and an understanding of what's happening next can be an important foundation in their sense of security. When young children notice changes in routine they may feel anxious or insecure. They may exhibit negative behavior, seeking attention, as a signal that they need some help with these feelings.

At preschools like Learning Circle Preschool, holiday celebrations and preparations are low key and are guided by the interests and needs of individual children. Discussions include opportunities to share the diverse ways families celebrate, as children informally share their own family traditions. Teachers listen carefully and offer opportunities for children to prepare for the holidays in ways meaningful to them – making a gift or card, talking about a trip or family visit with friends, sharing special foods, singing songs, or dancing together.

It's also important for parents to find ways to help children feel involved in holiday preparations. This helps alleviate potential stress or insecurity, and helps to assure that the holidays offer opportunities for young children to grow and feel connected to extended family and family traditions.

If you will be traveling, talking with your child about family plans is important. Allowing children to make some choices about what to take, and remembering favorite items, helps children with the transition of getting ready. If the trip includes visits to family, children can be encouraged to bring something meaningful to them as gifts, such as drawings or paintings.

If you are planning a gathering at home, it is helpful to involve children in planning and preparations for the day. Children can contribute to decisions about what to wear, may be able to help decide seat placement at the table, or may help prepare a simple recipe, such as cutting fruit or preparing a salad.

Adults might also want to avoid the pull towards the commercialism of the holidays by choosing toys and gifts that support play. Good toys for young children are open-ended; they can be used in a variety of ways. They offer play value over time; as children change and grow new ideas can be realized. They are well made, and will last over time, even with hard and varied use. They are not tied to media, so that play ideas come from each child's imagination and not from an external source.

For more information on the impact media has on young children, and for a guide to commercial free holidays, try www.commercialfreechildhood.org, the website of the Campaign for a Commercial Free Childhood.

For more information on toys, play, and young children, try TRUCE: www.truceteachers.org, the website for Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children's Entertainment

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