

## [KIDS' DAY]

# Turkey, Trimmings

## AND TANTRUMS

'Tis the season for...cranky children? Tantrums over turkey? Disastrous dinners? As wonderful as the holidays are, they can be stressful, especially if you're hosting Thanksgiving dinner or going to Grandma's, where your kids are expected to behave a certain way. To avoid holiday meltdowns, here are some suggestions from Karen Deerwester, a parent educator in Parkland, Florida.

Prepare your child by discussing the day's events ahead of time. Tell him who's coming to dinner and what you're serving.

Pace the day for toddlers and preschoolers. Take time out of cooking and preparations for a quiet story, a neighborhood walk or swinging on a swing. Or go to the library and check out a



Thanksgiving book so she can get a better sense of the holiday.

Avoid power struggles by letting children pick out their own outfits. Since the day's schedule will be long, allow your child to wear comfortable clothes that feel good. Similarly, don't fight with older kids about their mode of dress.

Compromise is the key. Make children feel like they're part of the action. Involve them in holiday responsibilities such as folding napkins, making place cards, setting the table, tearing lettuce and taking guests' coats.

Create familiarity. Look at family photo albums with your kids the

week before the get-together. Or let children decorate paper place-mats with photos of guests and then laminate them at an office supply store.

Listen. Stay close to help children communicate their comfort levels (e.g., it's OK not to kiss Aunt Rosie or play with cousin Mark). Give children a "way out." The day can get overwhelming, so make a plan ahead of time, such as a room without adults. Keep a bag of "tricks": small dollar-store toys to keep toddlers occupied.

Avoid holiday meltdowns by involving kids and listening to their needs.

—Jeanne Muchnick

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### "I'M GRATEFUL FOR..."

...The money we have to buy food and other important stuff, my parents who love and care about me, my cat, who I love, and for my hair. I don't want to be bald."

—Rosie, age 8, Bronx, NY



## Kidspeak

**MY SISTER AND HER HUSBAND WERE ARGUING ONE DAY. SHE TOLD HIM THAT HE DIDN'T HAVE ANY SENSE. MY 2-YEAR-OLD NIECE, SHANIA, SAID, "YES HE DOES. IN HIS POCKET."**

—Romona Evans, Macon, GA

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