Don’t Let Money Woes Get You Down This Holiday Season

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A whopping 80 percent of parents are stressed about tough economic times this holiday season, and this anxiety is amplified by children’s gift expectations, according to the latest Stress in America survey released by the American Psychological Association (APA).

But don’t let the cash crunch crush your spirit and steal your family’s holiday cheer. Instead, try these expert tips for getting through good or bad financial times during the holidays.

Honesty is the best policy. Don’t try to hide money troubles from your kids. The APA survey showed that 90 percent of kids knew their parents were stressed, even though less than one third of parents believed this was true. But before sitting down with the kids to explain the situation, think about what to say. This will help ease your kids’ fears about how a job loss or pay cut will affect the family.

Plan ahead. Have a family meeting and ask everyone to contribute creative money-saving ideas for the holiday season, such as game nights or trail walks.

Less is more. Go ahead and get into the seasonal spirit by buying a Christmas tree, but there’s no rule that says it has to be the biggest one on the lot. The same goes for your Christmas list. (Just check it twice!) You can scale down and limit it to just a few meaningful items.

Think outside the box. Suggest everyone give each other creative no-cash gifts, such as doing someone’s chores or scheduling future family activities. And homemade gifts can also be great and thoughtful alternatives to store-bought gifts.

See the glass as half full. Nice and simple: Focus on what you have instead of what you lack.

“During the holidays, it’s important for families to think outside the expectation of everyone getting everything on their lists,” said Mary K. Alvord, PhD, a clinical psychologist in private practice in Rockville and Silver Spring, Maryland. “Otherwise, it just sets adults and children up for disappointment.”

And who wants that added stress?

Click here to learn how to alleviate holiday tension with meditation.

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