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December, a beautiful month full of celebrations, family visits and gift-giving, is also a challenging one for children and families. Along with winter beauty comes higher utility bills, family visits mean separations and travel stresses, gift-giving can mean stretching the family budget, which isn't easy! So we are filling our December calendar with ideas that may help. We hope a few of them will be helpful for our parents, who do a heroic job raising great kids in a very busy world.

1 Begin the month with a family meeting. Write out the expected events on a calendar. Help children who have to share households know what the expectations may be and support them in making transitions.

2 Start a new tradition: shall we get a winter bird feeder? Shall we make our own Christmas cards? Shall we try a new cookie recipe? Have a family cookie decorating contest? Build a snow fort?

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4 The inexpensive suggestions offered here will actually make kids smarter and happier for much longer than video games and DVDs.

5



6 Inexpensive and important—purchase a large magnifying glass as a gift for your child this year. Go outside together and examine snow. Create a "wonder box" for collecting natural treasures.

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8 Children with secure attachments are allowed to love whoever they love, even if the adults don't get along. Help your child contact distant relatives by phone or email and support their excitement for their loved ones.

9 Share your family memories! What was grandpa like as a boy? What was the silliest thing that happened in your childhood? Who was the family trickster? The hero? The helper? What was special about grandma?

10 Kids want our time more than our gifts. Buy a family board game and make an effort to play it together often during Christmas vacation.

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12 We recommend "Sleeping Grump," available from Amazon. Based on "Jack and the Beanstalk," one player is the sleeping giant and all the other players must work together not to wake him or they will be eaten!

13 Another family gift to consider? A mini-trampoline! Everyone can use it to de-stress and get the heart rate up when the weather's too cold for a walk.

14 Christmas Program 6 p.m.



15 Choose a family service project. Shall we take some food to the food bank? Purchase extra shovels and shovel walks as a team? Visit a homebound friend?

16



17 Does your child have a "special place" to go for quiet play? Last month kindergartners read "Your Own Best Secret Place." Talk about it and help set one up at home.

18 Marsh Improvement Team Meets @ 11:15
Parents are needed to serve on our team!

19 Marsh kids know that making things, moving, observing nature, and finding comfort help us "get our sunshine back" when we feel sad.

20 What talent can you nurture with a gift? Would your music lover like a little keyboard? Your thinker a construction toy? Would your writer like a composition book and fancy pens?

21 Many gifts cost less than video games and will make your children happier longer.



23 Learn about each other! Ask everyone to name their favorite seasonal treat or tradition. Repetition of family rituals builds a sense of continuity and security.

24/31 The kids will enjoy feeding the pets and the birds a special treat tonight. You can "paint" bagels with peanut butter, roll in bird seed, string with yarn and hang on outdoor trees to

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26 Offer healthy foods alongside the seasonal treats to keep blood sugar levels steady and prevent unnecessary meltdowns.

27 Gratitude builds relationships and grows happiness. Help your child make thank you notes for relatives.

28 Exercise and sun are important for steady, good moods. Bundle up and play outside whenever possible.

29 New Year's tradition by organizing the family photos together. Talk about the good times. Make a family resolution. The kids will happily hold you to it!

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