

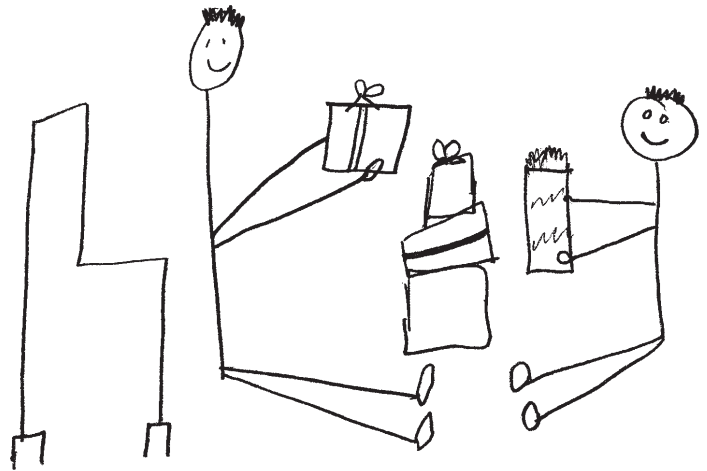
Do Dads Make a Difference? You Bet They Do!

IT'S A FACT: In our efforts to create holiday magic for our children, we develop expectations that often exceed human limits.

Kids and Holiday Stress

HALLOWEEN AND RAMADAN MARK the starting line. The whistle blows and the holiday race begins. It's an easy jog to Thanksgiving and then you break into a full run as the track curves toward Hanukkah, Christmas and Kwanzaa. It's a short sprint to New Year's, and then your family collapses at the Valentine's Day finish line. Ah, the holidays... Here are some tips to help you keep the "Ho ho ho" in your holiday season:

- **Keep your family routines.** Although we think of the holidays as child-centered events, children may get less attention and a disrupted routine while adults are busy preparing. Try to keep life as normal as possible.
- **Make holiday plans as a family.** Talk about your desire to minimize everyone's stress. Choose a few simple things that you can all do together that are fun for everyone. Create simple holiday traditions like family sledding night or sharing a bowl of popcorn while you watch a favorite holiday movie.
- **Look for signs of stress and acknowledge them.** Children may act moody, throw tantrums, whine, or complain of aches and insomnia. See this as their signal that the family may need to scale back. Ease up overall. Allow for unstructured play time, cancel extra appointments, maintain good nutrition, take naps. If your own stress level is mounting, consider some dad-to-dad support with a fun night out for the kids. Try the VNA FACT or 24/7 Dads group for both of you. (See back of this sheet for more information.)
- **Buy less and be together more.** In many families, men typically feel financial pressure the most. Remember that



having lots of expensive gifts doesn't guarantee a wonderful holiday. Although young children can't express it, they appreciate a relaxed parent more than an expensive toy.

- **Give back to the community.** Model the spirit of giving in child-friendly ways. Make cards with the kids that you drop off at a nursing home. Or shop together for a beautiful picture book to give to a holiday donation center. Acts of giving foster the child's proud sense that he's part of a caring family and an important contributor to the community.
- **If you do go shopping together, know your child's limits.** Most young children can only shop for about a half hour before they tire. Bring a snack to help your child maintain her energy level. Consider trading off with another family – one evening your child goes to a friend's house while you shop and the next evening the friend comes to your house.

REMEMBER – Sometimes we have to let go of a tradition or two to make room to experience the joy of family and feel true inner celebration.

Join us for the VNA Fathers and Children Together (FACT) group

*Bring your child for a fun night with dad!
Give your child's mom a night off!*

FACT brings dads and children together in groups. FACT is a fun place for dads to 'tune up' their parenting skills and connect with their kids through play and learning. All expectant dads and dads with children ages birth to 6 welcome. VNA FACT has been supporting dads and kids since 1993.

Find a VNA FACT group in your area:

TOWN	LOCATION	DAY AND TIME
Winooski	Winooski Community Center 32 Malletts Bay Avenue	Mondays 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm
Burlington	VNA Family Room 20 Allen Street	Tuesdays 5:00 pm – 7:30 pm
St. Albans	The Family Center 27 Lower Newton Street	Wednesdays 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm
Milton	Milton Family Community Center 23 Villemaire Lane	Thursdays 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm

- ✓ **Free!**
- ✓ **Don't cook – eat dinner at FACT**
- ✓ **Learn more ways to be a great dad**
- ✓ **For dads and kids, or just dad:**
 - * **Activities**
 - * **Playgroup**
 - * **Fieldtrips**

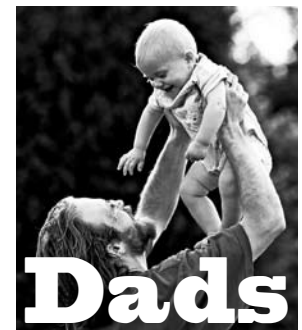
For more information about FACT and other programs for dads, call the VNA at 800 427-1908 or 860-4420, check out www.vnacares.org or email Steve Mojica at mojica@vnacares.org.



Funding for this project was provided by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Grant # 90FR002.

All of these services are available to all eligible persons, regardless of race, gender, age, disability, or religion.

It's a
FACT



*Make a
difference!*