

## Parent Resource

# Your presence is the Present!

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## Parent Resource Cont.

As much as we may love this time of year, it's also a time when we can feel extra stress. As we hurry to cross things off our to-do list, it's easy to miss the most important "to-do" of all: spending time with our little ones.

Mindfulness teacher Thich Nhat Hahn reminds us, "The most precious gift we can offer others is our presence."

The gift of our full, undivided attention is hard when we are busy and have lots of distractions and thoughts that weigh on us. Yet we know that this kind of loving presence is something children need. When children receive our nurturing attention, they flourish within warm feelings of being seen and heard.

During the holiday season, it can be even harder than usual to find these moments for calming connection. When we take a break from the bustle, slow down and give that precious gift of mindful attention to our children, we let them know how much they are loved. This attention also helps them adapt to the excitement and unusual routines that may come at this time of year.

Connecting in this way is good for us, too. We get a chance to enjoy the feelings and intentions that are a part of this season – love and gratitude.

## Parent Resource Cont.

Here are some ways to practice presence this holiday season:

- Be intentional. Set some time to silence or turn off all technology (phones, TV) and connect with your child. Daily if you can!
- Find a feeling of calm in your own body before engaging with your child. Take three deep belly breaths (or more if needed) to calm yourself, so that you can be a comforting presence for your little one.
- Let your child lead. Notice and follow your child's interests and attention. Respond with support and encouragement. Is he excited to see the moon through the window of your home at bedtime? Take time to gaze together.
- Use your senses to savor the season.
  - Share a mindful meal or snack together with your child – explore a seasonal food with all your senses. Talk about how it looks, smells, feels and tastes.
  - Take a walk outside together. Look for, listen to, feel, and smell the change of the seasons. Describe what you are experiencing so your child has the words to share your joy.
- Be kind to yourself. Take time to do a special thing that brings you joy. When we offer ourselves care and support, we feel better and are better able to focus our attention on our children.