

Hopkins County Extension

Family and Consumer Sciences

**HOPKINS COUNTY
COOPERATIVE
EXTENSION SERVICES**

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Parenting for the Holidays: Reducing Stress and Increasing Joy

Source: David Weisenhorn, Ph.D.; Specialist for Parenting and Child Development at the University of Kentucky Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment

The holiday season can be a magical time, filled with traditions, celebrations and family gatherings. However, it can also be stressful for parents, with busy schedules, financial pressures and the challenge of managing high expectations. Finding ways to reduce stress while increasing joy is essential for creating a holiday experience that is enjoyable for both parents and children.

There are many ways to reduce stress during the holidays:

- Set realistic expectations. Parents often feel pressure to create a "perfect" holiday but trying to live up to this ideal can lead to exhaustion and disappointment. It is important to focus on what truly matters—spending quality time together—rather than striving for perfection in decorations, gifts or events. Simplifying traditions and cutting out activities that feel more like obligations than sources of joy can significantly reduce stress.

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Following us online is an easy way to keep up with **Hopkins County Extension Family and Consumer Sciences**

Amanda Dame

AMANDA DAME

County Extension Agent for
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Lexington, KY 40506



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Parenting for the Holidays: Reducing Stress and Increasing Joy

- Plan ahead. By creating a holiday schedule that includes meal planning, shopping and downtime, parents can avoid last-minute chaos. Involving children in the preparation process, whether it's decorating, cooking or wrapping gifts, can also lighten the load while fostering family bonding.
- Take care of yourself. The American Psychological Association suggests that setting aside time for self-care, such as exercise, meditation or simply taking a break, is crucial for maintaining balance and reducing stress

To increase joy during the holidays, focus on:

- Create meaningful experiences and traditions that emphasize connection and gratitude. These can be simple but powerful, like baking cookies together, going for a family walk to see holiday lights or reading favorite holiday stories. Engaging in shared activities helps build positive memories and strengthens family bonds.
- Practice gratitude. Encourage children to express thankfulness for what they have and involve them in acts of giving. Whether it's donating toys, making cards for neighbors or volunteering as a family. Teaching children about the joy of giving can shift the focus away from materialism and foster a deeper sense of fulfillment. Research from the Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley shows that gratitude is strongly associated with happiness, even in children.
- Stay present in the moment. Savoring small joys, such as a warm cup of cocoa or a cozy evening on the couch, can make the holiday season more joyful. By letting go of unnecessary stress and focusing on connection and gratitude, parents can create a holiday atmosphere that is joyful, meaningful and memorable for the entire family.

Contact your local Hopkins County Extension office for more resources, tips and information.



The University of Kentucky Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment news and communications team provides monthly Extension Excludes in the categories of Horticulture and Natural Resources, 4-H and Family & Consumer Sciences. To see more exclusives, visit

<https://exclusives.ca.uky.edu>



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UPCOMING DATES

HOMEBASED PROCESSING AND MICROPROCESSING

If you are interested in getting **certified in Homebased Microprocessors** you can attend any of the classes in person or virtual classes. You can sign up at this link https://fcs-hes.ca.uky.edu/homebased_processing_microprocessing

Below are a few classes at Extension Offices in our Region.

- Virtual Workshop Grayson County- March 26, 2025- 9:30am - 2:30pm
- Hardin County Extension Office- Elizabethtown- April 2, 2025- 9:30am -2:30pm
- McCracken County Extension Office- April 21, 2025- 9:30am - 2:30pm
- Ohio County Extension Office- Hartford- April 29, 2025- 9:30am - 2:30pm

BARN QUILT PAINTING CLASS FEBRUARY 26, 2025

Join us in bringing the new Extension Office to life with your creative touch!

Join us for a fantastic opportunity to make a difference in our community! We're thrilled to announce a Barn Quilt Painting Class at the Extension Office on February 26th! This is your chance to dive into a fun, artistic experience while contributing to a beautiful barn quilt square that will be proudly displayed in one of our meeting rooms! Don't miss out on this chance to showcase your talent and brighten our space. If you're excited to participate and paint your very own barn quilt square for the new Extension Office, **contact us at 270-821-3650 for more details.** Let's do something amazing together!

A FEW EXAMPLES:



GO HOME
WITH
YOUR OWN
BREAD
STARTER!

SOURDOUGH BREAD

TAUGHT BY: BUNNY WICKHAM



JANUARY 13TH, 2025
10:00 AM

**\$8.00 FEE
DUE BY JAN 8TH**

SPACE IS LIMITED
RSVP BY JANUARY 8TH
CALL (270) 821-3650

HOPKINS CO. EXTENSION OFFICE
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MONEYWISE

VALUING PEOPLE. VALUING MONEY.

VOLUME 16 • ISSUE 1

Hopkins County Extension Office | 75 Cornwall Dr | Madisonville, KY | 42431 | (270) 821-3650

THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: FORMING HEALTHY FINANCIAL HABITS

Have you ever wished you could change the way you handle money? Learn more about the science of forming habits and how you can use these strategies to improve your finances.

HOW HABITS ARE FORMED

James Clear, author of *Atomic Habits*, describes habits as behaviors that we repeat so many times they become automatic. There is a four-step process to creating a habit that forms what he calls the “habit loop.” Those four steps are:

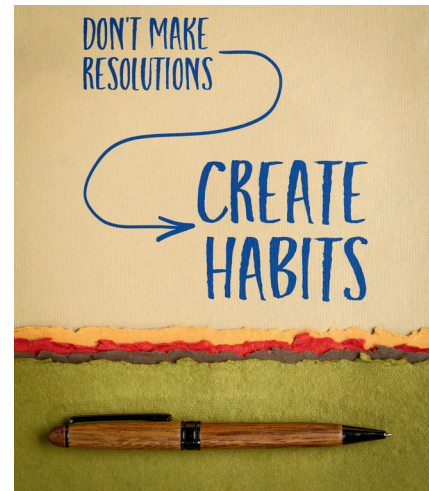
Cue □ Craving □ Response □ Reward

The first two steps involve *responding to a problem*. The last two steps involve *arriving at a solution*. By becoming more aware of our habit loops, we can take actions to create a good habit or break a bad habit.

HABITS AND MONEY

So how do we apply this to personal finance? Think of something you want to change about your money habits. Maybe you want to reduce the number of times you eat out each week. You might accomplish this by going to the grocery store and cooking at home.

First, identify what “cues” you to eat out in the first place. The **cue** may be hunger. For example, you saw a commercial for pizza,



drove past the sign for a delicious sit-down restaurant, or it was 6 p.m. and that is your normal dinner time! The **craving** is for food. The **response** is to buy the food, and the **reward** is that you are no longer hungry.

In order to change this cycle – and the money spent on it – there are things we can do to reinforce a good habit, as well as things we can do to avoid a bad habit. The table below breaks down this dinnertime “habit loop.” Namely, you want to make a new habit obvious, attractive, easy, and satisfying. Similarly, you want to make an old habit invisible, unattractive, difficult, and unsatisfying.



Cycle of Habit Loop	Form a Good Habit - Make it ...	Break a Bad Habit - Make it ...
Cue: Hunger	Obvious: Plan ahead. Place the recipe for tonight on the counter or save a picture to your phone.	Invisible: Avoid TV and internet before mealtimes if advertisements trigger you to eat out. Or go home a way that avoids restaurant temptations.
Craving: Food	Attractive: If cooking is a chore, then pair an activity you enjoy with it. Maybe call a friend or listen to music, or an audio book or podcast.	Unattractive: Give yourself reminders of why you don't want to eat out. Put a picture of what you're saving for in your wallet to remind you not to spend.
Response: Buy Food	Easy: Prepare your cooking space the night before, so when you come home from work it's a breeze to get started.	Difficult: Make visiting restaurants more of a chore. Delete apps that allow for restaurant delivery or remove phone numbers for call-ahead orders.
Reward: Full	Satisfying: Reward yourself for sticking to the plan! Prepare a small dessert to complement your meal or plan a fun after- dinner activity.	Unsatisfying: Appoint someone to hold you accountable and remind you of your commitment.

CHANGING YOUR HABIT LOOPS

Use this blank chart to note a financial habit you would like to create or change. First, decide on the habit, then identify the parts of the cycle in the first column. Finally, brainstorm ways to reinforce a good habit in the second column and/or find ways to make a bad habit less appealing in the third column.

New Habit: _____

Cycle of Habit Loop	Form a Good Habit - Make it ...	Break a Bad Habit - Make it ...
Cue:	Obvious:	Invisible:
Craving:	Attractive:	Unattractive:
Response:	Easy:	Difficult
Reward:	Satisfying:	Unsatisfying:

REFERENCE:

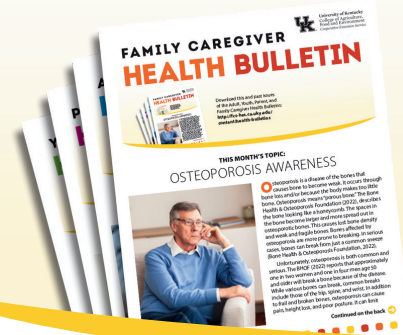
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FAMILY CAREGIVER

HEALTH BULLETIN



JANUARY 2025

Download this and past issues of the Adult, Youth, Parent, and Family Caregiver Health Bulletins:
<http://fcs-hes.ca.uky.edu/content/health-bulletins>

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC

PHYSICAL AND MENTAL BENEFITS OF COLD WEATHER ACTIVITY



While staying safe in the cold, snow, and ice is a priority, don't let winter keep you from the outdoors if you are able. Both mental and physical health can be negatively affected by the shortened, cold days. It is not uncommon to feel sluggish or less productive. Use winter to your advantage and get invigorated.

Spending time outdoors is essential for well-being and can positively affect mental and physical well-being, including reducing stress and enhancing sleep. Research supports the idea that spending at least 120 minutes a week in nature has positive benefits on health and well-being (White, et al., 2019). Time in nature can include being physically active or just relaxing and taking in the sounds, sights, and smells.

Spending time outdoors during the winter can be a little more challenging, especially as we age, however. As we get older, we lose body heat faster than when we were

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younger, making us more susceptible to cold weather. As a result, it is important to know the risks and benefits of spending time outside.

Dress warm and feel the sunshine.

When you are dressed warmly and can feel the sun on your face, your body is triggered to create vitamin D, which is good for your bones, muscles, immune system, and mood. To get sunshine in the winter, dress appropriately for cold weather and venture out for a picnic on your porch, build a snowman, photograph the snowflakes, walk around the neighborhood if sidewalks are clear of snow and ice, or take a winter hike and soak in the winter birds and other wildlife.

Stay physically active.

Daily physical activity can improve physical and mental well-being. Depending on where you live or visit, winter outdoor activities may include walking, shoveling, snowball fights, and cross-country skiing. Winter exercise needs extra planning and preparation.

- **Talk to a health-care provider about your health and outdoor activity.** Cold temperatures make it more difficult for the heart to pump blood throughout the body which may result in heart strain. Blood vessels can narrow in cold weather and prevent muscles from getting the oxygen they need to function properly. As a result, cold weather can make you vulnerable to muscle strain and injury.
- **Learn the signs of hypothermia.** Hypothermia occurs when the body's temperature loses heat more rapidly than heat is produced. When the body's core temperature drops below 95 degrees, it may cause a medical emergency. According to the Mayo Clinic, some signs of hypothermia include shivering, weak pulse, slurred speech, confusion, low energy, and shallow breathing.
- **Avoid frostnip and frostbite.** Exposure to severe cold and direct contact with ice, cold liquids, and frozen metals can lead to skin and tissue freezing. The early stage of frostbite is called frostnip, which causes cold and numbness. As frostbite gets worse, skin can change color, tingle, sting or feel prickly, throb, and become waxy-looking or hard.

Frostbite can occur on covered or uncovered skin, especially on the fingers, toes, ears, nose, and cheeks. To prevent frostbite, cover your extremities, stay hydrated, recognize the symptoms, and go indoors immediately. If your frostbite is more than mild, the Mayo Clinic recommends seeking medical attention to help prevent permanent damage.

- **Prevent falls.** The chances of falling increase when the ground freezes and becomes icy and slick. The best way to stay safe in icy conditions is to stay inside. If you must go out, take your time, wear proper footwear, use handrails, and walk like a penguin, which means taking smaller waddle-like steps that help maintain your center of gravity.

Be smart!

While going outside in winter can be good for you, watch the weather. If the conditions are too extreme, stay indoors! If you choose to go out on a nice winter day, pick the warmest part of the day to be outside when the sun is at its peak. Dress warmly, avoid cotton, and wear layers made of wool, fleece, or other fabrics that help keep you warm while wicking away moisture. When exercising outdoors, layers allow you to stay comfortable and not overheat. Keep your head and hands and feet covered so you do not lose heat. Wear proper footwear for the conditions. Protect your skin, lips, and eyes. Lastly, stay hydrated.

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FAMILY CAREGIVER HEALTH BULLETIN

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