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**How to Turn Tough Times Into Fun Times, A Daycare Guide: Planning for Holidays &**

**By Clairece Feagin**

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**Clairece Feagin**

Teachers and caregivers often spend vast amounts of time preparing for special occasions, particularly for holiday celebrations. In fact, preparation for some holidays consumes so much teacher time that the children and their program are neglected, perhaps for as long as two or three weeks. This is not an acceptable practice.

Young children do not need -- or expect -- elaborate celebrations. Two- and even three-year-olds will have very little if any understanding of the meaning of most holidays or other special occasions. They have little if any knowledge of the customary or traditional activities associated with these occasions. Older preschoolers may remember some features of school or family observances from previous years, but their enjoyment of a celebration is not based on elaborate adult preparations.

The aspects of special occasions that children find meaningful are those activities that they themselves can participate in directly and fully. Children do need--and have every right to expect--fun, self-paced, child-centered activities every day, including special occasions and celebrations.

To make special occasions enjoyable for children,

1. keep celebrations simple and short;
2. plan child-centered, child-paced activities;
3. keep preparations simple;
4. begin preparations no earlier than one or two days before the event or holiday;
5. involve children in every aspect of preparations;

6. keep the agenda flexible.

New or unusual situations, unknown people, a larger number of people than a child is accustomed to, or new requirements even in a familiar place are all stressful for young children. The most successful events are those that include many familiar features.

Clairece Feagin holds an Ed.M. from Harvard University. She is author of Contemporary Books' "Stories for Parents" and "Let's Read Together" series as well as various social studies texts and teaching materials. To order the complete course listed above and other self-instruction courses for childcare providers and parents, please visit CARE Courses, at <http://www.carecourses.com>

## **Looking For A Baby Sitter?**

**By Bill Johnson**

The task of finding a good baby sitter is not an easy one for most parents who don't a lot of alternatives. However, there are some few nice resources and informed approaches to take when considering taking a baby sitter for the family. And there are also visible signals that indicate that your choice might not be the correct one.

No doubt, it is a huge task to find someone to care for your children, because most parents simply dread the thought of leaving their children with a stranger, even the specially trained child care providers. The task of leaving your child in someone else's care might be difficult, but it is equally the correct step to take if you want your child to develop a healthy attachment to you.

For parents with a child in a daycare, it is a good idea to ask about what is termed parents night out. This kind of service is rendered by some daycare centers, which practically eliminates the need for a baby sitter.

A good example is my niece. She attends daycare three times in a week, while I act as her baby sitter the other two days. And on one Saturday every month, her daycare staffs will look after the children for a fee, which is a welcomed service and relief to parents.

Note however that it is not every daycare that offers baby sitter service; there might be a need for a baby sitter on a day different from the one chosen by the company. This could be due to a lot of reasons that ranges from aging grandparents that cannot physically cope with children's needs, your family is living far away from relatives and friends, to the simple reason that you just don't feel at ease with someone who is not trained to baby sit. What should you do in such situations?

The most important thing is to have a network. You can make enquiries from friends and neighbors who have children that are of the same age as yours who they use.

The church and your work place are also good places to ask questions. Both these methods are effective ways to get a good baby sitter in your vicinity.

But sometimes when you've eventually found a baby sitter, you may entertain doubt about your judgment. Questions like the experience of the person, or if your child will get the correct care will usually cross your mind. And most of the time this hunch may be proved right, because some baby sitters are certainly not very good.

A good way to determine this is to close observe the behavior of your child. How does the child respond to the arrival of the baby sitter? Is it by crying or by getting unreasonably upset? Does the child look too eager for return?

Though this might sound odd because every child is excited about the prospects of seeing their parents, but if your ward does this by peering out of the window or by standing near the door, then it is time to get a new baby sitter.

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