



January 2026

Dear Families,

Transitioning from the end of the year and returning to school in January can be difficult for children and teens!

The end of the year can be a very special and very busy time for many families. Holidays typically include breaks from school and spending more time with family doing fun activities. However, once the holidays are over, there is an abrupt transition from holiday time to returning to school. Parents usually expect children will naturally settle back into their routine with school, extracurricular activities, and friends. Unfortunately, this transition can be difficult for some children and lead to a “let-down effect” and “post-holiday blues” in children, teens, and even adults.

Children and teens do not always have the skills to communicate their feelings and emotions. They are more likely to express their feelings through behaviors. As your child returns to school you may notice:

- increased irritability or meltdowns
- sadness, tearfulness, or low energy
- difficulty transitioning back to school or daily routines.
- sleep disruptions or trouble settling at night
- clinginess or separation anxiety
- less interest in activities he or she enjoys or spending more time alone
- regressed behaviors such as needing more reassurance
- reactive behaviors

Join us this year as we create monthly newsletters! Each month will have a different mental health topic and resources to support your students.

Experts note that post-holiday letdown is common in children and teens returning to routine, particularly after extended breaks and changes in structure. Post-holiday blues are not usually long-lasting, and most children and teens return to their usual self in a short time. The good news is there are several actions you can take as a parent or guardian to help your child cope with post-holiday blues and turn them into an opportunity to connect, reassure, and grow closer as a family.

1. **Normalize Kids' Feelings After the Holidays** – Help your child understand that it is normal to feel a little down after big events. You might say “Sometimes when something really fun ends, our bodies and brains feel a little sad or tired afterward.” The goal is to explain it in a way that lets your child know there is nothing “wrong” with them. When you stay calm and matter-of-fact, you are role modeling for your child that emotions are temporary and manageable.
2. **Use the Post-Holiday Blues as a Conversation Starter** – Kids are more likely to open up to talk to you once they know their feelings are normal. This provides an opportunity for you to ask open-ended questions like, “What was your favorite part of the holidays?” or “What feels different this week?” Really try to listen more than you talk, and try not to jump in with quick fixes or lectures. Reflect back what you hear so your child feels understood. I heard you say that “You’re sad because Grandma and Grandpa went back home and it was super fun to have them with us for the holidays.” These conversations lay the groundwork for emotional skills they’ll use for a lifetime and is the best present you can give your child!
3. **Create Simple Routines that Bring Comfort** – Schedules often change significantly during the holidays, so the return to regular routines can feel harsh for kids. To help your child readjust, you can build in small, predictable rituals of connection like reading a book before bedtime, praying as a family, or sharing hot cocoa together. Invite your child to help create the rituals and be prepared for surprises at what they might like to do! By

describing these rituals as something special your family does after the post-holiday blues start to show up, kids begin to see routines as comforting, not boring. The more grounded the daily rhythm feels, the easier it is for kids to ride out lingering sadness or restlessness.

4. **Plan Small Moments of Joy at Home** – After the holidays, kids often think the fun is over because the big events are done and you might often hear the phrase “I’m bored.” As the parent or guardian, you can show your kids that good things still happen in regular weeks, and they get to choose not to be bored! Plan small, low-cost traditions like Friday night pizza, a movie and popcorn night, or board-game afternoons. When you frame these ideas as ways to brighten the post-holiday blues, kids learn that joy doesn’t have to be expensive or tied to presents. This is another opportunity to invite your child to help choose some of these traditions so they feel a sense of ownership and have something to look forward to. These simple rituals make home feel like a stable, happy place even when school and life may feel a bit sad or overwhelming.
5. **Help Kids Reflect on Giving, Not Just Getting** – The phrase “giving is better than receiving” sometimes gets forgotten by kids during the holiday season by kids. Shifting kids’ focus to talk about the moments they gave something to another can be very powerful. A suggestion is to ask your child how they felt watching a sibling open a gift from them or how they felt when the family donated toys or food. January is the perfect month to plan a small act of kindness for someone else. Ideas include making cards for neighbors, crafts for friends at school, or cookies for teachers. Doing acts of kindness for others helps kids see how good it feels to brighten someone else’s day and builds empathy and resilience. Over time, kids learn that connection and generosity last longer than any toy.
6. **Watch for Signs Your Child Needs Extra Support** - Most of the symptoms of post-holiday blues fade with time, routines, and reassurance,

but some kids struggle more than others. If your child continues to experience symptoms such as irritability, sadness, sleep disruptions, regression or reactive behaviors, or being unable to enjoy things they usually love, it may be more than just a temporary dip. Let your child know that lots of kids experience the post-holiday blues, however if those feelings seem to be getting bigger, or not improving, instead of smaller, you're there to help them talk to a school counselor or pediatrician. Reaching out for help sends the message to your child that mental health matters and that it's always okay to ask for help. Trust your instincts; you know your child better than anyone else!

This season after the holidays is an invitation to show kids that love and connection don't depend on holiday lights, big family celebrations, or presents. As parents/guardians when we slow down, listen closely, and build small, meaningful rituals, we teach our children that their feelings are safe with us. Those moments doing a family activity together, laughing over something funny, or having your child share what is deep in their heart, will be remembered long after the holidays are over. Instead of thinking of January as just a month to get through, consider thinking of this month as an opportunity to connect, reassure and get closer with your child.

Links for Parents/Guardians for Activities/Rituals:

[100+ Winter Kids Crafts to Beat the Winter Blues - Make and Takes](#)

[Budget-Friendly Winter Activities to Do With Kids](#)

[30 simple family ritual ideas to bring your family closer](#)

[33 Family Traditions to Enjoy Together](#)

Have a great month!

Terri Johnston, MSED, LPCC-S / terri@sopcc.org

Kathleen Schlueter, MSW, LSW / kathleen@sopcc.org