



aspire psychological

# Holiday Anxiety in Children: Symptoms and Evidence-Based Parent Supports

## Ways Anxiety Shows Up in Children Around the Holidays — and Why It Happens

### Increased irritability

Holiday overstimulation and disrupted routines increase emotional load.

### Clinginess or separation anxiety

More visitors, less predictability, and parents being busy.

### Stomachaches or headaches

Common somatic expression of anxiety.

### Avoidance of family gatherings

Social anxiety or discomfort with loud/unfamiliar environments.

### Hyperactivity or 'wild' behavior

Sensory overload and lack of structure.

### Emotional outbursts / crying

Lowered emotional bandwidth during overstimulation.

### Withdrawal or shutting down

Freeze response to overwhelm.

### Increased reassurance-seeking

Uncertainty around changing events triggers anxiety.

### Overthinking social interactions

More social demands amplify uncertainty.

## How To Support Them



### Structure & Predictability

- Preview the day
- Use visual schedules
- Give transition warnings

*Predictability helps kids feel safe and prepared.*



### Supporting Worried Thoughts

- Normalize feeling nervous
- Name the worry ("worry voice")
- Teach simple calming statements

*Kids feel braver when they understand their worries and know what to say to themselves.*



### Emotion Regulation Skills

- Build in movement breaks
- Name feelings early
- Allow quick step-away breaks

*Small resets help kids stay calm and steady.*



### Family & Social Strategies

- Set realistic expectations
- Create a "tap-out" signal
- Give them a job or role

*Clear communication lowers pressure during busy gatherings.*



### Sensory & Environmental Supports

- Bring familiar snacks
- Keep sleep rituals consistent
- Bring comfort items

*Sensory anchors help kids feel grounded in new settings.*



### Reducing Overwhelm

- Offer simple choices
- Debrief after events

*Less pressure + more control makes holidays easier.*



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### Need a Trusted Referral? We're Here to Help.

If a child's anxiety is interfering with daily life—or if parents feel stuck—call my practice.



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