

# How NOT to Hurt Your Kids this Holiday Season



By *Jamie Wells, M.D.* — November 23, 2016



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Kids are my favorite. They are way cooler than adults. No giant leap there. As a pediatrician whose coffee has yet to kick in this day before Thanksgiving, I shouldn't be too impressed with my own grasp of the obvious.

They see a world of wonder. They, especially the littlest ones, view their environment with amazement replete with such an honesty and purity in their perspective. This natural curiosity should be— in most situations— a nurtured and valued commodity.

However, like what goes up must come down, this quality can be accompanied by a touch of mischief and consequent hazards. So, instead of unloading an endless barrage of terrifying doctorate-level home and object child-proofing restrictions, enjoy this practical guide to surviving the holiday season. Emphasis on surviving and enjoying, not on perfection because where is the fun in that?!

## **Dr. Wells' Guide for How NOT to hurt your kid this Holiday season:**

1. Don't hurt your kid.
2. Don't let them hurt themselves.

See how this goes?! Relax, enjoy, be aware but be present to cherish the incredible memories you are creating. More often those stories of going to the ER over Christmas because Johnny put a little Santa in his ear make up the really, really good stuff. The laughter. The joy. Don't underplay the significance of joy in yours and your family's health and well-being. These stories

become the recall you especially need when the challenging times in life reveal themselves. The moment Johnny explained to the doctor with only the most profound logic a child could have of why he did it in the first place, “Because Billy said I couldn’t.” This is living. This is what it’s all about and time is fleeting.

### **How NOT to hurt your kid with objects:**

1. Know YOUR child.
2. Let Common Sense be your guide.
3. Be aware of the unique activities—kitchen or elsewhere, gifts and so on—of which your family partakes during the holidays.
4. Know YOUR guests.

Only a parent truly knows what his or her child is most capable of with an ever-present understanding that avoiding accidents and injury is a year-round endeavor. Appreciate who your child will be exposed to during the holiday and what their capabilities are in contributing to problems or solutions.

Is grandma going to be leaving her heart medicines within reach of your toddler? If so, then don’t let that happen. The rules of not leaving poisonous detergents and cleaners within his grasp don’t take a vacation because it is Thanksgiving. Crawling around the kitchen floor for a toddler still makes no sense as an okay option whether you are cooking a turkey or baking a birthday cake in June— splatter injuries and the like are prominent in this setting. The smart choices still are smart choices. Cords of electrical or garland components still present the same choking hazards any long strand would.

### **How NOT to let your anxiety and worry transfer to your child (for the holidays, the election and in life):**

1. Have a plan if there is an injury
2. Know First Aid and CPR
3. If you hang around people who prompt inner turmoil, then don’t hang around those people. Surround yourself with calming, practical and sensible influences. Worry is contagious.
4. No one has a greater impact on their kids than parents. They feed off of your anxiety and mimic what they see. Lead by example.

Fear limits us all. Kids don’t have it. Something occurs living long enough and experiencing life enough that puts fears onto all of us. Like anything else, a little necessitates survival and can steer us from danger. Excessive amounts that are currently pervasive in our culture cause paralysis, overthinking and indecision. Often these ill effects from toxic, chronic sustained stress are more destructive than embracing the courage it sometimes takes to live the life you imagined.

Lost sleep. Weight fluctuation. Irritability. Persistent hyper vigilance and maintaining a high alert state do physical harm. I would argue that indecision is often more damaging than a decisive action and is as much of a decision that serves merely to keep you stuck.

Having a plan, in general, were something to go awry genuinely helps assuage the additional strife these circumstances bring. Prominently putting a list of your local poison control, pediatrician, emergency contacts and so on will always be a good idea. Being trained in the basic resuscitative efforts will empower you and lessen somewhat the torment and panic. Spending your finite time on this earth with people who are resilient, resourceful and adaptable will be a powerful adjunct in your navigating the world.

### **How NOT to waste these precious moments:**

1. Spend more time living than avoiding living.
2. There is no perfection—it is overrated anyway.
3. Let go of attaching such significance to the small stuff. It will not serve you.
4. Practice Gratitude. Then, do it again. And, again each and every day.

Have a wonderful Thanksgiving and holiday season. May it bring the continued fulfillment of all of your dreams!

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