

December 21, 2009

Communication key to Christmas calm

Kids Helpline is encouraging parents to talk with their children about family plans for Christmas in the lead up to December 25.

General Manager Counselling Services Wendy Protheroe said while Christmas is a time of great excitement and joy for many children and families, for others the pressures and stress of the season take their toll on mental health and relationships.

“Children can feel anxiety during Christmas, particularly if there has been a significant change in their family during the year such as a separation or divorce, a new blended family or the loss of a loved family member,” she said.

“Many children and young people in separated families worry about how to please both parents over the Christmas period, especially on Christmas Day.

“Children who call Kids Helpline are often aware if their parents are having difficulty coping and are very concerned about how this will impact on themselves or younger siblings.”

For some families, the financial cost of Christmas causes increased stress.

“After 18 years of speaking with children and young people we know what they want most is love and attention not presents,” Ms Protheroe said.

“If a parent has to work on Christmas Day or if you can’t afford presents there are still ways to make the day special.

“In the lead up you can plan family activities like putting up the tree together or making your own decorations and gifts and on Christmas Day focus on enjoying the time you have together.

“Remember, your children will take their cues from your attitude towards the situation, so if you are positive and make Christmas fun what they will remember is the time they had with their family not the gifts.”

“We are asking parents to consider their children’s needs and to take the time to speak with them to help find a way of increasing the chances for a happy Christmas.

“Parents need to encourage their children to talk openly about their feelings and concerns and be prepared to share their own feelings.

“Remember that love, commitment, patience and time can overcome most difficulties faced by families during the festive season.”

Kids Helpline, Australia’s only national children’s counselling service, provides 24 hour counselling services to young people aged 5 to 25 years – free call 1800 55 1800 or online at www.kidshelp.com.au
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