

## BAD DAYS DURING THE “HAPPIEST TIME OF YEAR”



Advent calendars have a way of producing both excitement and anxiety for me. As a child, I loved the anticipation of the countdown but as an adult, it sends me into panic. Immediately following Remembrance Day ceremonies, along comes the familiar pressure of preparing for a “**perfect Christmas**”: finding the right gift, coordinating decorations, delicious baking, creating unique crafts, flamboyant lights, exciting activities, entertaining, attending school concerts, relaxing family time, travelling to relatives, trying to keep within a budget, and so on. All of this pressure creates a frantic tornado of **red** and **green** swirling around in my brain and well...I get a little short tempered and snappy with those closest to me, including my kids. I feel like I want to skip it all and go on a solo trip to Mexico!

As Student Support Facilitator for Northern Gateway Public Schools, I frequently see evidence of higher levels of both positive and negative stress, with many students. Christmas can be a difficult time with shared parenting, health concerns, grief, financial difficulties, job loss, family stress, etc. It can create dread, fear and nervousness. The structure and predictability of the school day, teachers and peers will not be available for two weeks, and for some children this is frightening. Being aware of such distress gives me a different perspective on the season.

Despite the excitement of the Christmas, all kids (and adults) can be overcome with stress, anxiousness and have a difficult day. I found this list on a blog I follow which may help you support those around you.

### 14 GOOD THINGS TO SAY TO YOUR CHILD WHEN THEY’RE HAVING A BAD DAY

1. I love you
2. **I am already proud of you**
3. Take a deep, slow breath
4. **This is not your whole story**
5. Do you want to talk about it
6. **I am on your side**
7. Do you want a hug?
8. **Can I give you hug?**
9. You won’t feel like this forever and I am here for you right now.
10. **Is there anything I can do to help?**
11. Just take the one next step.
12. **I know you’ll be able to get through this.**
13. How about some hot chocolate? (or a walk? Or a funny move?)
14. **I really, really love you**

Permission to share from [www.guiltychocoholicmama.blogspot.com](http://www.guiltychocoholicmama.blogspot.com)

Christmas is so much more than the presents, decorations and entertaining. Take time this holiday season to focus on the gifts that you have been given, that are not under the tree. Let’s be intentional on building and celebrating the gift of relationships with those in our lives: big and small, young and old.

*This article was submitted by Tammy Charko BA, BSW, RSW. Tammy is Northern Gateway Public School’s Student Support Facilitator. She advocates for students and parents, providing a link to other supports within the community. Tammy has been a social worker for over 20 years and is a mother to 4 children, 3 of which are teenagers.*