

Stopping the Holiday Whine

Lauren Healey, 4-H Youth Development Agent

Christmas is behind us and the New Year is right around the corner. As you transition from one holiday to the next, you may begin to notice some changes in your children. Specifically, a dissatisfied and nasal tone of voice that is commonly referred to as “whining.” This change is almost as certain as the peach drop in Atlanta!

Whining and complaining are common in children, especially when they are hungry, tired, bored, stressed, or not getting enough attention. All of which tend to increase during this time of year. So what can you do to get your children back on track?

First, find out the reason for the whining. Is it when you have been shopping for several hours? Or right before meals? If you find the trigger for unhappiness, you may be able to prevent it by changing its cause.

Respond to your child’s requests. If they want to go into a certain store or eat something specific for dinner, as long as it is reasonable, go along with it. Giving attention to your child’s requests, or offering rewards for good behavior, may prevent excessive complaining.

Draw a child’s attention from the cause of whining. If the child is whining for something she cannot have or do, try distracting her with something she *can* have or do. For example if playing with big brother’s Nintendo is out, offer to play a game that belongs to them.

Finally, if all else fails, ignore it. Calmly explain that you will not respond to whining and give a warning. After the warning, ignore the behavior. Then praise him or her when they use a more appropriate tone of voice.

Keep in mind that children who eat well, get enough rest, and understand the rules and the behavior that is expected of them may be less likely to complain. Using these guidelines may help parents be more proactive in stopping whining before it starts.

Holidays can be stressful, especially for children. Following these tips can help you truly make this the most wonderful time of the year!

For more information about the 4-H program or other youth development issues, contact the Oconee County Cooperative Extension Office at (706) 769-3946 or stop by our office located behind the Oconee County Courthouse.