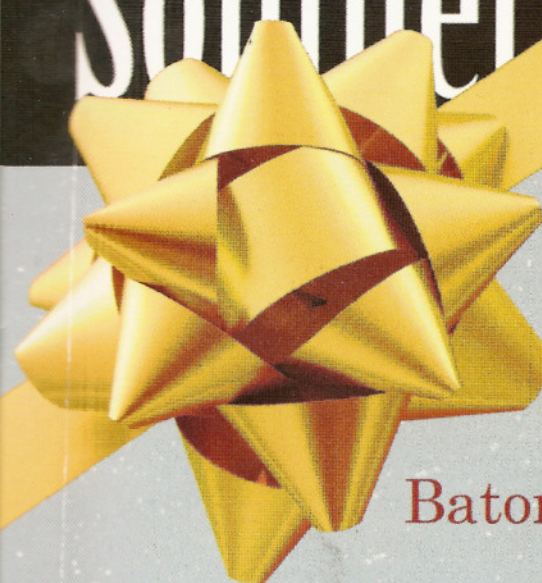


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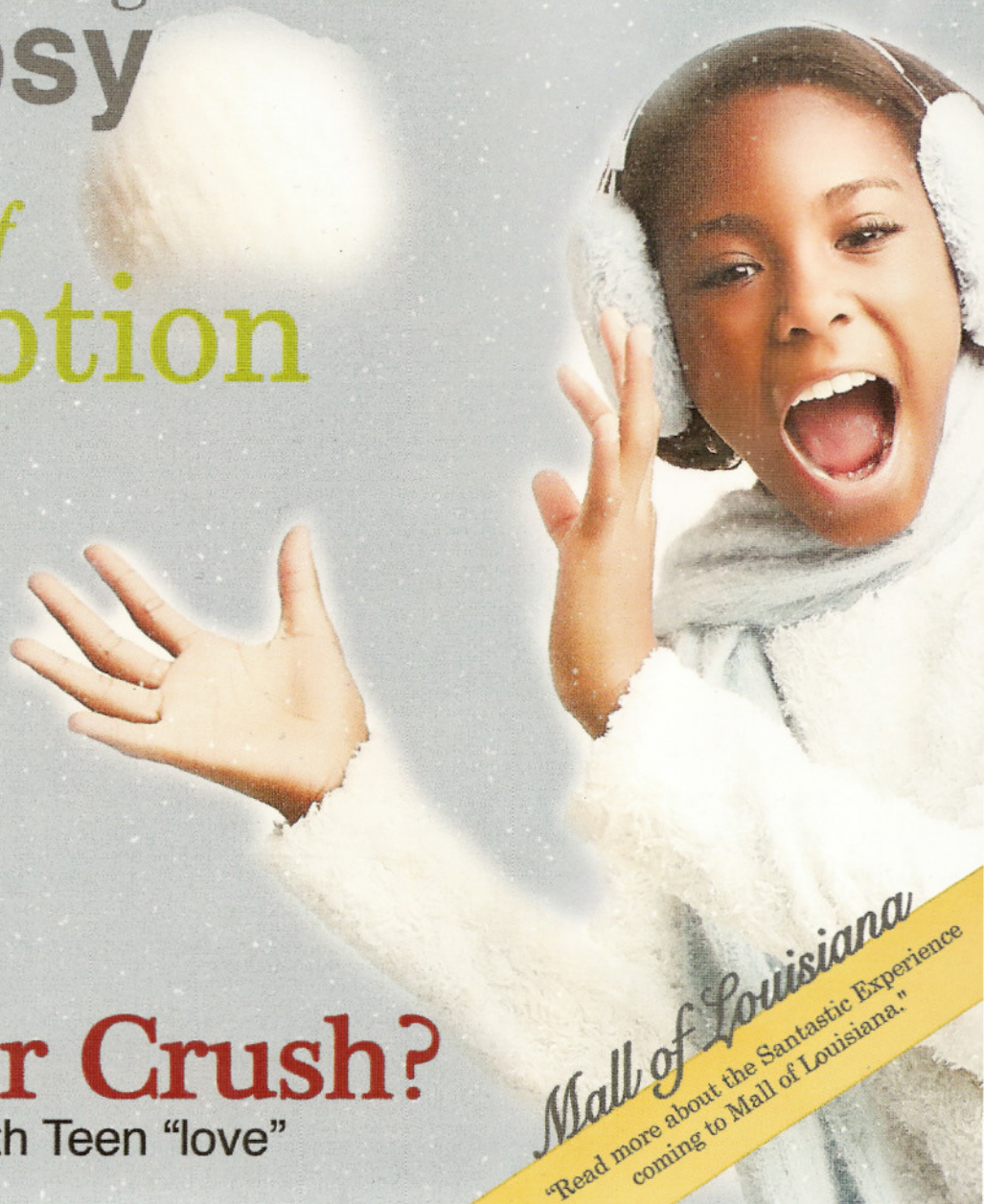
November/December 2007



*Bringing Christmas
to Baton Rouge*
Baton Rouge Christmas Parade

understanding
Epilepsy

The Gift of
Adoption



Crash or Crush?
How to deal with Teen "love"

Mall of Louisiana
"Read more about the Santastic Experience
coming to Mall of Louisiana."

TEEN BEHAVIOR during the holidays

Holidays with teenagers are stressful enough without comments from well-meaning relatives about your teen's nose ring or blue hair. These clashes are bound to create new tensions and family fights during an already pressure-packed time.

"Coping with your teen is challenging enough 10 months a year, but when you add November and December holidays, things can get testy if you're not prepared," says Kate Kelly, author of *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Parenting a Teenager* (Alpha Books) and a parenting expert who has raised three teenagers. "The holidays are filled with potential for alienation," she said. "It's your obligation as a parent to work actively with your teen to help them feel a part of the holidays."

To help parents with their teens during the holidays, Kelly offers these suggestions:

1. Remember that family activities take priority during the holidays. Tell your teen that family obligations are mandatory during the holidays, Kelly said. "Despite what your teen might say, he or she really doesn't want to be left out of the family holiday traditions." Remind your teen that their friends also have the same family obligations during the holidays.

2. Provide your teen with a holiday schedule and set limits. Write down a schedule with dates and times when family activities are planned so your teen can plan his or her schedule. "Include them in the plans so they don't feel broadsided by a family event," she said. Teens need to have time to be with their friends and a schedule helps your teen know when he or she is free to enjoy their company. Don't let the teen's schedule take priority over the family schedule; make it clear what nights belong to your teen and what nights are for family.

3. Offer some flexibility. Most teens don't want to spend hours with family. If a four-hour visit with relatives is "too long and boring," let your teen leave early if you live close by. "If your teen has been a good sport, cut them some slack for good behavior."

4. Require a dress code. Disagreeing over clothes goes with the territory, but if ripped or bizarre clothing will cause chatter at Grandma's house, you need to discuss this with your teen. "Teens are capable of understanding that they should be respectful of other people's wishes," Kelly said.

5. Encourage relatives not to be critical. They too need to respect teens, Kelly said. "It might be helpful to give them a 'heads-up' call ahead of time before they see your teen, especially if they've gotten a nose ring or dyed their hair since their last visit." Remind them that critical comments will only increase family stress, and that having a peaceful holiday celebration is what is most important. Also, talk to relatives about appropriate gift giving. "You can advise your relatives on the things your teen likes," she said. "Year after year of inappropriate gifts sets up a psychological border between the generations...and makes the teen think the relative has no clue who he or she is."

6. Encourage teens to think about others during the holidays. "Parents have a great deal of influence over their teens. This is the best time to encourage family values," Kelly said. If your relatives are going through a hard time, such as a divorce or death, remind your children what they are going through. Also, family activities, such as volunteering at a soup kitchen, will remind your teens of the less fortunate in our society. "These things may not register in your teen's mind this month or next month, but it will live on long after they are out of their teenage years."

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