

## Holidays a Good Time to Check in on Children's "Emotional Health"

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Sioux Falls, SD – Families around the country will celebrate Thanksgiving this week, and child advocates say the holiday season is a great time for parents to practice their skills to support the emotional well-being of their children. Susan Randall with *South Dakota Voices for Children* believes parents should think carefully about how they're interacting with their kids, and consider the patterns they're establishing in terms of a youngster's emotional health.

"Parents, caregivers and others who spend time with children are, in large part, responsible for shaping a child's concept of self. The messages we send to our children and the experiences around them really help them develop this."

This week is also National Family Week, and Randall says there are plenty of ways moms and dads can encourage their kids' emotional growth.

"Parents need to be intentional about listening to, and speaking with, their children every day. Take time during meals and establish a ritual where everybody around the table is asked to say something positive about themselves and every member of the family. And they should be asked to think about a good experience they had during the day when they're put to bed."

Randall also believes it's important for parents to organize a weekly "date night" with their children, which can include games, painting, drawing or reading together. She says strong families are at the center of strong communities, and children are better equipped to overcome challenges and setbacks when families spend quality time together.

Earlier this year, *South Dakota Voices for Children* released "A Parents Guide to Children's Mental Health Services in South Dakota" which is available online at [www.sdvoicesforchildren.org](http://www.sdvoicesforchildren.org).

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