

Coordinated Care can help!



All children/youth should be seen by a PCP
at least once a year.

Call us at **1-844-354-9876** for help finding a
provider, scheduling appointments, and
information on wellness exams.



Coping with Holiday Stress for Youth in Care

11/7/2018

Today's Agenda



- I. Common holiday stresses for adults
- II. Preparing foster youth for the holidays
- III. Working with the birth family
- IV. Working with your family
- V. Coping with holiday stress

Holiday Stress in Adults

11/7/2018

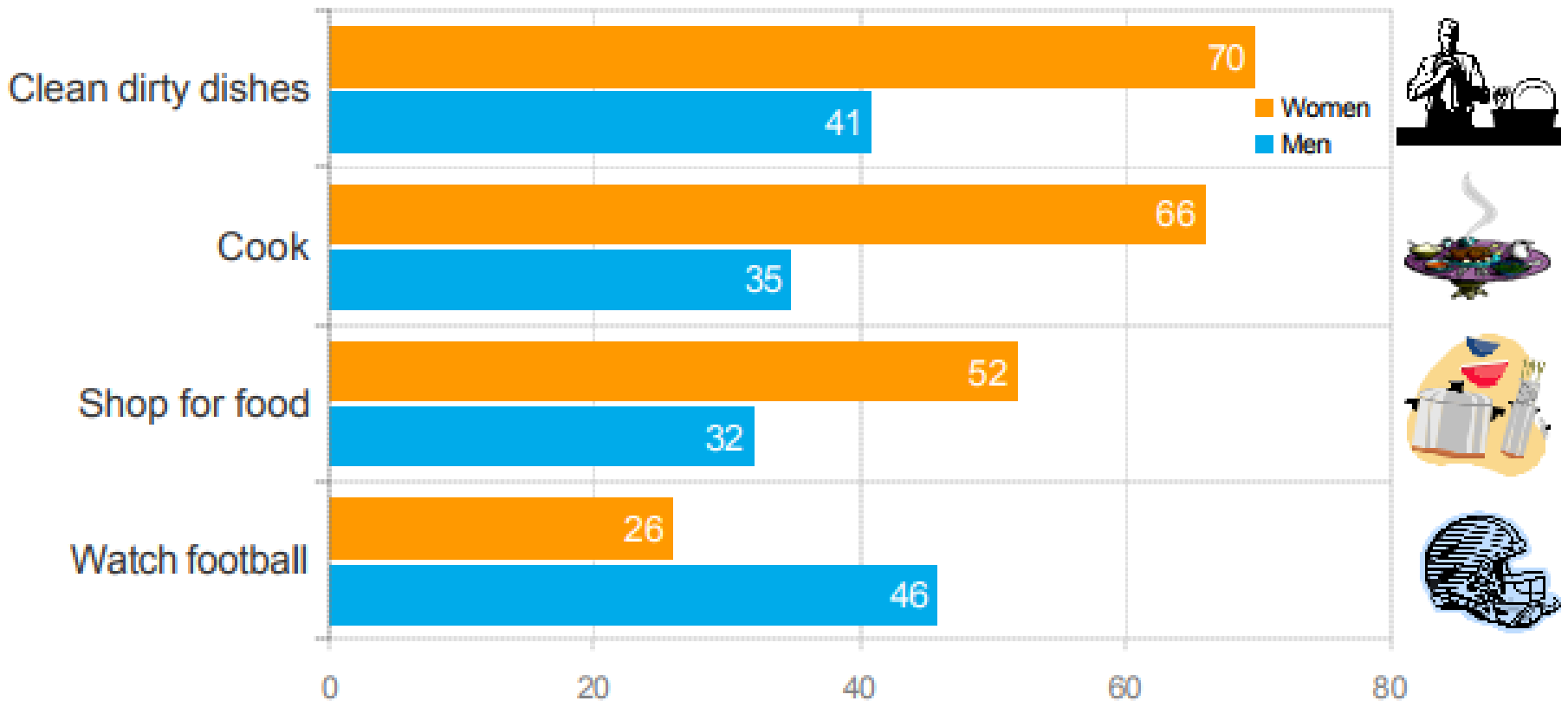
Holiday Stress



- 8 in 10 Americans anticipate stress during the holiday season (APA 2008)
- Women are more likely than men to report an increase in stress during the holidays
- Top stressors include:
 - lack of time,
 - money, and
 - gift giving

Thanksgiving Day activities (by gender)

On Thanksgiving Day, how likely is it that you will do each of the following activities? (percent responding "very likely")



<http://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2006/12/holiday-stress.pdf>

How do we cope?

- APA Holiday Stress Survey shows Americans are more likely to use sedentary coping skills during the holidays:
 - Listening to music
 - Reading
 - Eating
 - Drinking alcohol

Positive Coping Strategies



- Find time for yourself
- Have realistic expectations for the holidays
- Seek support from family and friends

Holiday Stress for Youth in Foster Care

11/7/2018

Celebrating Holidays with Foster Youth



“Conflicting loyalties and lost dreams often make the holidays a difficult time for children in foster care.

Just as studies show that holidays are stressful times for most of us, these reactions are compounded for youth placed in your home.”

- author Crystal Killion

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www.wifostercareandadoption.org

Foster Youth and the Holidays

- Cannot assume which holidays may be stressful
- Cultural and religious holidays
- Family/personal holidays like birthdays



Possible Holiday Stressors for Youth

- Concerns about their birth family
- Grief and loss reminders
- Don't know what to expect in foster home
- Changes to visitation schedules
- Changes to daily schedules
- What else?

Before the Holidays

11/7/2018

Anticipation



- For some children anticipation can be more stressful than the day itself
- Anxiety around “the first” _____ in foster care
- Constant reminders through social media, public decorations, TV commercials, etc.

Preparing Foster Youth for the Holidays

- Help them imagine what to expect in your home
- Discuss changes to routine
- Discuss any events/rituals



Preparing Foster Youth for the Holidays



- Talk ahead of time about concerns and excitement
- Try to incorporate youth input and wishes for how they would like to spend holidays

Helping Foster Youth During Holidays

- Share the customs, beliefs, activities, and meanings the holidays may have for your family
- Learn about the beliefs, customs, and activities of the youth you foster



Helping Foster Youth During Holidays

- Try to keep the holidays low key in order to help minimize some of the stress
- Be mindful of children's developmental level when planning activities
- Reassure them if you can, about the safety and care of their birth family
- Expect some conflicting and confusing emotions

Former Foster Youth Perspective

“The holidays never felt special. Worse than that, for me they were a time of regret and confusion. At Christmas time I felt so guilty when my foster mom bought me gifts because I knew she didn’t have to and sometimes I felt like she bought them because she was obligated to. If she bought gifts for me I felt guilty and if I didn’t receive gifts I would have felt unloved. It was really a ‘no win’ situation.”

- Dan, a former foster youth

<http://nc.casaforchildren.org/files/public/community/volunteers/HelpYouthInFC-Holidays.pdf>

Working with the Birth Family

11/7/2018

Working with Birth Families During the Holidays

- Ask youth about their experiences and traditions
- If possible, ask birth family members about their holiday traditions and customs



Working with Birth Families During the Holidays

- Use this time for the youth in your home to make small gifts and send cards to their birth families or old neighbors and friends



Working with Your Family

11/7/2018

Making Family Gatherings Easier

- Talk about upcoming events and the people who will be there
- Prepare them for the “characters” in your family and tell them about other children who might be there



Making Family Gatherings Easier

- Tell them if your celebrations are quiet or loud, sacred or silly, big or small
- Describe the home or place where the event will be held



Making Family Gatherings Easier

- Give youth a camera so that they can record the celebration
- Don't make promises you may not be able to keep
- Make sure you and your family/friends are on the same page regarding gifts



Making Family Gatherings Easier



- Try to introduce children to your extended family *before* the holidays
- Remember to respect confidentiality
- Give your family some advice on how best to interact with youth

Coping with Holiday Stress

11/7/2018

Signs of Grief and Trauma Responses

- Hyper arousal
- Re-experiencing
- Avoidance/becoming withdrawn and isolated
- Regressing to younger behaviors developmentally
- Irritable
- Anxious



Coping with Holiday Stress



- Be prepared for the sadness and grief
- Give your youth time and space to grieve
- Make a coping plan B, C, and D



Tips for Helping Youth Cope

- Recognize what the youth is feeling is perfectly normal given the situation
- Allow them to talk about holidays on their terms – avoid pushing, but don't avoid it either



Tips for Helping Youth Cope

- Identify with them. Tell them about a time that you felt as they do
- Get them involved in outside activities
- Find ways to incorporate traditions from the birth family
- Always have a backup plan and be flexible



Resources



American Psychological Association <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/holiday-season.aspx>

American Psychological Association <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/parents-holiday.aspx>

American Psychological Association

<http://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/index.aspx#part1?tab=1>

Four Adopted Siblings and lots of Stress Joshua Sparrow MD. New York Times 12-31-2010

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National Child Traumatic Stress Network

<https://learn.nctsn.org/mod/nctsnwebinar/view.php?id=9016>

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