

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.

Inoculations up to date?

Flu shots?



Coping with Holiday Stress for Youth in Care

11/4/2020

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

11/4/2020

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
 - gift giving

Generational trauma



- Most people get their holiday joy or stress from their childhood, which carries into adulthood. Many people have trauma from their past, and pass it on to their children, including those beliefs around holidays.

What are your holiday stresses?



Certain family members

Job

Decorating a certain way

Spending too much money

Memories of your own past holidays

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
- Your children may reflect your mood!

Holiday Stress for Youth in Foster Care

11/4/2020

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

Reprinted with permission from Adoption Resources of Wisconsin, Inc.
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

11/4/2020

Anticipation



- For some children anticipation can be more stressful than the day itself
- Anxiety around “the first” _____ in foster or adoptive 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
- *What would you think of your traditions if you were a stranger to the family?*

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

11/4/2020

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

Do I know you??

11/4/2020

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, *and again, don't promise what you don't know about the future!*

Coping with Holiday Stress

11/4/2020

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



This too shall pass...



- *Finally, help your child (and self) realize that the holidays are also a state of mind. They can be good, or neutral, if we find something positive in them.*
- They also are not every day, and tomorrow is Wed. (or Thurs, or Sunday, or...)

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

Thank you for your time!

11/4/2020

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

Fostering Perspectives Vol. 15, No. 1 November 2010. Reprinted with permission from
Adoption Resources of Wisconsin, Inc.
(www.wifostercareandadoption.org)

National Child Traumatic Stress Network
<https://learn.nctsn.org/mod/nctsnwebinar/view.php?id=9016>

Solutions Newsletter Family Services Issue 34