FOSTER CARE AND THE HOLIDAYS

By: Dr. John N. DeGarmo, Ed.D.

The stockings are hung, by the chimney with care, in hopes that ... In hopes of what? For many children who have been placed into the foster care system, they have come from homes where there was no Christmas, there was no hope. They have come from families that did not celebrate a holiday. They have come from environments where there were no presents, no tree. They have come from homes where there was not holiday joy or love.

The holiday season is upon us. Christmas, Hanukah, New Years, Kwanzaa; these are times that can be extremely difficult for many foster children. During this time of holiday cheer, many foster children are faced with the realization that they will not be “home for the holidays,” so to speak, with their biological family members. When they wake up Christmas morning, and are surrounded by people who just may be strangers to them, strangers who are laughing and having fun, it can be a very difficult time for them, indeed. To be sure, it is a day that is a stark reminder to these children that they are not with their own family. It is during the holidays when families are supposed to be together, yet these children in care are not. They are not with their families, and they may not know when they will see them next.

Along with this, foster children also struggle with trying to remain loyal to their birth parents while enjoying the holiday season with their foster family.

Tutus and Tennis Shoes

Where crowns of curls are born

A Des Moines woman's passion for hair care has turned into educational opportunities for those caring for African American children. Kanisha is a trained cosmetology instructor and loves to share her knowledge and skills with others, especially foster and adoptive parents.

You can purchase a Crown Care Kit: this kit provides tools, products, basic 'how-to' steps, and videos on African American children's hair care.

If you can't afford a kit, Kanisha will donate a kit to you.

Or, you could choose to sponsor a kit for a foster or adoptive family in need.

Many resources are available on their website from making appointments for hair care, to online education, live hands-on classes, chat sessions, events, hair care products, and tools. For more information, check out Kanisha’s website: tutustennisshoes.com

For other articles and resources on Transracial parenting, check out IFAPA's resources page:

http://ifapa.org/resources/online-resources-for-parents.asp

Enjoy the Holidays. The next Weekly Word will be sent out December 30.
PLAYFUL PARENTING BUILDS BETTER BRAINS: 10 TOOLS FOR SUCCESS

From Adoptalk 2018, Issue 4

By Jessica Sinarski, LPCMH

You know how it goes: one minute, the kids are calm and playful. The next minute, you’re thrown into a world of whining, complaining, and flat-out defiance. One particular night, it seemed everyone in my family was primed for full meltdowns, especially when I told my preschooler that he could not eat a granola bar for dinner.

Some nights, this tension would have continued until they were all asleep, with frustrations, consequences, and teeth-gritting for all of us. That night, however, I was able to “keep my lid on.” I scooped the preschooler up, flailing legs and all, and marched him out of the room. “you’re running even though your feet aren’t touching the ground!” I said, with humor in my voice. He looked at his legs and stopped screaming long enough for me to pretend to fly him into his room. At the edge of the bed, I started to make his stuffed animals jump around and talk to him. Before long, stuffed animals were flying everywhere, and we were both laughing and having a great time. The rest of the night felt like magic: he got ready for bed without complaint and fell asleep feeling happy and loved. It changed my night as well—instead of carrying frustration into the evening, I felt a cheery affection for my sweet, strong-willed son.

That night, and in many other high stress situations, I have come to learn that laughter really is the best medicine.

Pausing to Play

Think of the last time you were really frustrated with your child. As you envision that moment, are your thoughts racing to the negative? Do you feel any tension in your jaw or shoulders? Even now, distanced from that incident, your brain and body are producing a stress reaction. Over time, it can be easy to get stuck in this feeling of stress, making power struggles and conflict more likely. Pressing pause on that cycle is what made that evening with the stuffed animal possible.

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