Helping Children in Foster Care to Manage Holiday Stress and Emotions

The holidays can be a stressful and busy time for everyone. For children in foster care, this time of the year can be especially difficult. Many children experience feelings of guilt, shame and sadness during the holidays. And their feelings might be really mixed. One young adult remembers how hard the holidays were for her and her conflicting feelings: she was sad because she was constantly reminded of how she was not with her biological family but she also felt guilty because she looked forward to presents and time with her foster family.

Understanding how difficult this time may be for foster children can help us support them and let them know we care. Here are some ways to help these children cope during the holiday season:

• Give them space for difficult emotions. Children may show an increase in negative behaviors when they are feeling upset. This can be stressful for everyone. There are some things you can do to help:

  1. Help your child recognize their feelings and normalize that it is ok to feel upset. Especially for young children, they may not have the tools they need to be able to recognize their feelings.

  2. Get outside.

One of my favorite parts of the holiday season is strolling through the downtown area of our city and admiring the twinkle lights in the trees. It’s easy, it’s free, and it gets us outside. Maybe your holiday preparations take you to a farm to choose the perfect tree. Or into your backyard for a giant snowball fight. There’s just something magical about being out and about during this time of year. So, bundle up, head out, and be sure to enjoy a cup of hot cocoa when you get back home.

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25 free family holiday activities

MAKE SPECIAL MEMORIES THIS YEAR — WITHOUT BREAKING YOUR BUDGET

Posted by: Team Tony

Between the presents, the special occasion clothes and the food and beverages, the Christmas season can get expensive before you even factor in the fact of school vacation — how are you going to keep the kids busy for two whole weeks? If you’re wondering how you’re going to keep your family entertained and pay for this holiday season, then it’s time to take a minute and get creative. Get your kids off their mobile or gaming devices and make some precious memories together with these free (or very cheap!) ideas.

1. MAKE GINGERBREAD HOUSES
If you have the time and initiative, skip the pre-fab houses from the supermarket and make your own gingerbread.

2. HOLIDAY LIGHTS TOUR
Walk or drive to the best-lit houses in town and let everyone decide which houses are their favorites.

3. PINECONE BIRD FEEDER
This kid-favorite is super simple. Let your child hunt for a pinecone, then slather it in peanut butter and roll it in birdseed. Hang from a tree or bird feeder (preferably near a window) and watch out for delighted birds (or squirrels, as the case may be).

4. DECORATE YOUR FRONT DOOR (OR YOUR CHILD’S) LIKE A PRESENT
With a bit of wrapping paper from the dollar store and either a ribbon or bow, your front door is transformed into a giant gift!

5. HOLIDAY MOVIE NIGHT
Gather round with a bowl of air-popped popcorn or pistachios and select your favorite holiday movie for a night that’s sure to please the whole family. Can’t decide which is your favorite? Make it a double-feature!

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