

# A Family For Every Child Matching Assistance



*"We should not be asking who this child belongs to,  
but who belongs to this child."*

## Adoption and the Holidays

With the holiday season upon us, now is a great time to think about how you are going to help your newly adopted child get through it. For many, the holidays bring up feelings of excitement and happiness. There are traditions, gifts and family reunions to look forward to. For a child who has spent most of their life in the foster care system, however, the holidays can bring up different emotions: Sadness, anger, and anxiety. Your child may have never experienced a "happy" holiday season, and the reminders may bring up unpleasant memories. The following is a guide for you to use in ensuring a smooth holiday transition.

### How to Help Your Child Through the Holidays

The following are some suggestions for helping your child get through the holiday season:

First and foremost, try and **understand your child's feelings**. This may be difficult especially if they don't want to open up to you and share their thoughts, but do your best to uncover why your child may be feeling sad. Assure them that they are in a safe and loving environment and let them know you are excited they are part of your family.



### Educating Relatives

If you choose to introduce members of your extended family to your child during the holidays, it will be important to "prep" them first. This will hopefully avoid uncomfortable moments and questions later on.

Start off by letting your family members know that your child's story is just that - their story -

**Don't aim for perfect.** Throw your idea of a "perfect" holiday out the window, because it's probably not going to happen. Understand that with a new child in your home, your family traditions may change to incorporate your child's favorite traditions. Ask them if they made any special foods, sang specific songs, or had a favorite tradition either with their biological family or a foster family. By incorporating those into your family traditions, you are showing your child that they are an important member of your family.

You will also need to **let go of preconceived notions** of what a holiday is supposed to be. For many, it's the time of the year you have your annual family gathering. For a newly adopted child, this may be incredibly overwhelming and stressful. If this is your child's first year with your family, maybe re-think the major holiday gathering and plan a smaller, more intimate event with just your immediate family.

Try and **maintain your routines**. This may be difficult with days off from school and work, traveling, entertaining guests, etc. but do your best to maintain some of your daily structure. Children who have grown up in foster care thrive on consistency and routine, and if they feel like things are going out of their control they will lose control themselves. Maintaining even the simplest of routines, like the ones in the morning and nighttime, may help ease some of your child's anxiety.

**Allow for some quiet time.** If your child is prone to becoming overstimulated, allow for some down time every day. This is important for your child to re-group and it reduces the change of outbursts.

**Start the conversation now** with your child about their feelings and expectations for the upcoming holiday season.

and it is up to them to share whatever details they want.

Educate your family about certain behaviors or mannerisms they may witness during the day, and explain how they relate to the child's past. You don't have to go into great detail about their past; just share the minimum to make your point.

If your child is of another ethnicity, culture or religion from your family, explain to your relatives the significance of their traditions, and why it is important to you to incorporate them.

Educate your family on "adoption-friendly" language. You can find a list of adoption-friendly terms [here](#).

Finally, remember that you are the child's parent, and you are doing the best you can to raise them. Some of your family may try and provide well-intentioned advice on how to raise your

## Additional Information & Resources

**Adoptive Families** - [Holidays Can Bring Up Lots of Emotions](#)

**Adoptivity** - [Adopted Children and the Holidays](#)

**Adoption Goddess** - [How to Survive the Holidays When Your Heart is Breaking](#)

**Adoption Learning Partners\*** - [Overwhelmed for the Holidays](#)

**C.A.S.E.** - [Holidays With Extended Family: An Opportunity for Connection](#)

**C.A.S.E.** - [The Holidays: An Opportunity for Healing](#)

**C.A.S.E.** - [The Holidays: Challenges and Opportunities for Adoptive Families](#)

**Foster Club** - [Helping Young People in Foster Care Through the Holidays](#)

**Lovin' Adoption:** [Making Halloween Happier](#)

**Lovin' Adoption:** [Taking the HAUNT Out of Halloween](#)

**The New York Times** - [Four Adopted Siblings, Lots of Stress](#)

*\*Please note: A Family for Every Child has not attended this webinar, but we want to provide all our foster and adoptive families with support and educational opportunities, pre and post-placement.*

child. Thank them for their suggestions, but let them know what your experience as a parent is different than what they went through, and you are doing the best you can with the resources you have to raise a happy, healthy, and well-adjusted child.

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