

Celebrating the Holidays

The upcoming holidays can be a time of magic, happiness, joy, and love. But for some foster children, their experiences with this time of year are filled with sadness, anger, confusion, and loneliness. But it doesn't have to be that way this year. Decide that this holiday season you're going to make a difference in your foster child's life through creating happy holiday memories. As this holiday season progresses, here are some things to consider and keep in mind as you help your foster child celebrate and create positive memories.

Traditions: Holiday traditions are important to both the individual and the family unit. Remember that your foster child may have had holiday traditions in the past. It is important to incorporate both your traditions with your foster child's. This will help unify your familial relationships. Even if your foster child does not have past family traditions, ask if there are any holiday traditions that he or she would like to begin. While it is important to keep former family holiday traditions, consider starting new ones. That way, each of your loved ones will feel involved, included, loved, and important. And that's the way it should be.

Decorate: Preparing your home and yard for the holidays can be a fun family event. Encourage your foster child to join in the fun, since he or she is a viable and wanted part of your family. Consider assigning different areas of the house to different family members. Assign them in pairs, and let them decorate how they both see fit. Encourage creativity and love. After your entire family is done decorating your home, take a little tour as a family. This is a fantastic way to make everyone in your household know that he or she is a part of your family. It is also a great way to encourage unique personality and creativity.

Photo Books or Albums: One way to hold onto cherished memories is to create a photo book or a photo album. Sit down as a family with your developed or printed pictures, and let everyone create his or her own photo book of favorite holiday memories. It's important to let everyone have their own book because of the fluidity of many foster care relationships. This will ensure that your foster child will always have something to remember this beautiful holiday season in your home.

Celebrate Differences: Your foster child may have different religious or cultural beliefs that differ from those of your household. That's perfectly fine. Embrace and celebrate those differences. Consider letting your foster child orchestrate, plan, and lead his or her cultural or religious celebrations. It can be a wonderful learning experience for your entire family--a chance to learn about a new culture or varying religious beliefs.

Give Back: The holiday season is the perfect time to give back and provide loving service to others. Give back to your local foster care community along with your community in general. Have a foster child who has aged out of the system over for dinner or donate food or gifts to families who are struggling or could use a little extra support. There are so many options and opportunities for service, love, and outreach in your local community.

The holiday season is about family, love, forgiveness, and charity. It is a time to unify your loved ones. Remember that some people are away from their families during this time of year. One of those people may be your foster child. Remember that as you and your family enjoy holiday festivities. There are so many ways to help your foster child feel loved, welcomed, and appreciated. Be creative, and have a beautiful holiday season.