



Post Adoption Resource Center Newsletter Oakland & Macomb County

Recipe for a Happy Holiday



The holidays are a special part of the year that most people look forward to, but for some families, the thought brings fear or even dread. For children who have experienced early childhood trauma, have Reactive Attachment Disorder or for children with ADHD or sensory processing issues, the holidays can be hard. In fact, sometimes children who fall into those categories will even attempt to sabotage the holidays.

It is not much fun walking around on eggshells knowing that your child may be set off at any second, but holidays are not much fun for those kids either. Big days can be a reminder of all that they have lost, how far their behavior is from what they want it to be, or of how their brain works differently than other people's. The root of the sabotaging behavior is often guilt and shame, but there can be other causes as well, including:

Lack of routine. The holidays can make children feel a lack of control. They may then attempt to assert control and take charge. The unpredictability and uncertainty can feel unsafe. With less of a set schedule, children may also be overtired and eating poorly which can affect behavior and mood.

The weight of expectations. When a child believes that they will fall short of the expectations placed on them, the child may decide to just quickly blow things up to get it over with. The stress that comes with anticipating the disappointment they may cause can be overwhelming.

Continued on pg. 2

PARC UPDATE: COVID-19

Orchards Children's Services and the Post Adoption Resource Center Program hopes your family continues to be safe and healthy during the Covid-19 pandemic. Orchards continues to keep family safety at the forefront of our services. Our PARC staff have enjoyed seeing families during our past monthly support activities. We feel so connected to you and thank you for allowing PARC the opportunity to get to know your family. As we begin transitioning to more in person events, PARC will continue to you keep you updated on all our upcoming events via our website, email communications and our Facebook page.

Connect with PARC at:

Website: parc-orchards.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/OCSPostAdoptionResourceCenter

Email: parcocs@orchards.org

**Orchards
Children's
Services**

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Inside this issue:

**Recipe for a Happy
Holiday, continued 2**

**PARC in the
Community 3**

Suggested Read 3

Upcoming in PARC 4

*For more information
on the Post Adoption
Resource Center
please contact us at*

313-530-9746

*Or visit our website at
PARC-orchards.org*



Cont. From Page 1: Recipe for a Happy Holiday

Feeling unworthy. Abandonment or the perception of abandonment in children can lead to a deep sense of shame, making them feel as if they are unworthy of love, having good things happen to them, gifts or attention. With that deep-rooted feeling of being unworthy, sabotaging behaviors can begin to emerge in order to force what the child sees as inevitable disappointment. If the parent then responds in anger to the behaviors, it only further validates the child's belief that they are unlovable.

Triggers and sensory overload. During the holidays, triggers are everywhere. Smells, sights, sounds, and memories of the past can cause a fight, flight, or freeze response. Excitement and anxiety feel the same in the body. Butterflies in the stomach, increased breathing rate, a loudly thumping heart, sweating, and trouble sleeping are the same body responses whether you are feeling excited or nervous. When your child feels those body sensations, it can bring memories of stressful times, when they felt that way due to anxiety.

Unreasonable expectations. Even the most well-grounded children tend to have high expectations during the holidays. This is sometimes magnified in kids who have a trauma history or have sensory needs. Some adopted children have a fantasy of what life would be like with their biological parents and nothing in reality can live up to that fantasy.

The focus of relationships. For children with Reactive Attachment Disorder, Christmas can be a nightmare because relationships are usually largely focused on during the holiday season, and there is more emphasis put on family togetherness. This feels like a threat to kids who are putting protective walls up when it comes to family relationships.

Grief. Consider a simple tradition such as decorating the Christmas tree. Ornament collections may include baby's first Christmas ornaments, handprint, homemade ones, etc. How must that feel for our kids who joined our family when they were older? We can buy them ornaments to represent their first years and their milestones, but we cannot replace the hardships of their early years. Holidays have so many things that can magnify grief, sadness and loss.

Protection. Attempting to protect their heart from further disappointment, a child who has experienced early trauma will put walls up and push others away. With everything being magnified during the holidays, those walls have a tendency to go higher and that pushing away can turn to an aggressive shove (literally or figuratively).

Ideas to Help Reduce Stressors

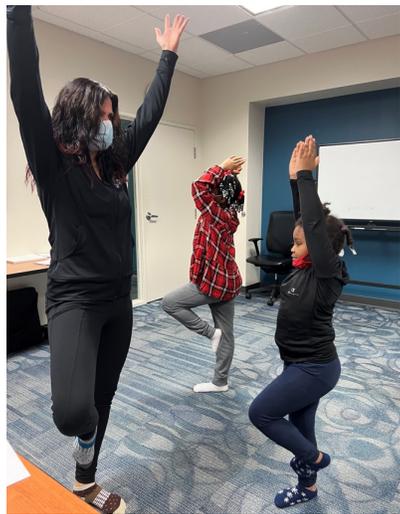
- Lower your own expectations.
- Maintain routines as much as possible.
- Talk candidly with your child ahead of time. Speak factually about past holidays and your child's challenges with them. Brainstorm strategies with them to help this year go more smoothly.
- Less presents! When it comes to kids who struggle with the holidays, less is more.
- Simplify. Practice saying "no" to some of the invitations so that you do not over schedule.
- Be willing to let go of things that don't work for your child. You may need to set aside even treasured holiday traditions for a few years.
- Some kids do not do well with surprises. Even though you may think that surprises are fun, they may cause additional stress for your child. If your child falls into this category, avoid the surprises.
- Prepare your child ahead of time what to expect. Tell them where you are going, who will be there, how long you will be staying, what you will be doing there, and what your expectations are of them. Use a calendar to give them as much notice as you can of upcoming events.

**Information expanded from: "The Chaos and the Clutter"*

PARC in the Community

Over the past several months, PARC has been able to move towards some more in-person events. We love being able to spend more time with all of you!

PARC held an all-day, hybrid conference “Beating the Odds” and also



held the first hybrid parent support group. During the support group, Carly Ceni worked with parents on the benefits of moving in “trauma healing” followed by a live demonstration with the children present.

Several families joined us at the Hallowest Trunk-or-Treat event held by Orchards Children’s Services and the Frescura family. One family shared the following: “We are extremely thankful for all the events that PARC puts on. This Trunk-or-Treat was so special to us because this is the first event that our son didn’t want to leave! He actually enjoyed being a 50’s Rock and Roll boy and we enjoyed seeing him excited for the first time ever for Halloween”.



We hope that you and your family were able to reflect on some things that you were thankful for this past Thanksgiving. PARC was thankful to



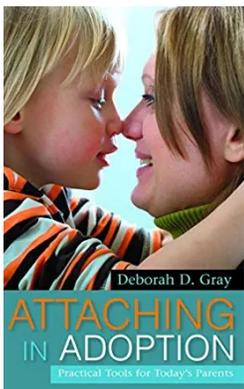
be able to provide some families with some of the thanksgiving fixin’s.

Santa decided last year’s drive-thru event was such a success, that Santa decided to join us once again! Being able to see the kids faces light up added so much warmth to the chilly afternoon breeze!



PARC is always working to come up with new ideas, trainings and activities and as always, we are open to hearing any suggestions or feedback you might have. Feel free to share any pictures too, we love to see them!

Suggested Read



Attaching in Adoption: Practical Tools for Today's Parents

Author: Deborah D. Gray

This book provides practical parenting strategies designed to enhance children's happiness and emotional health. It explains what attachment is, how grief and trauma can affect children's emotional development, and how to improve attachment, respect, cooperation and trust.

Parenting techniques are matched to children's emotional needs and stages, and checklists are included to help parents assess how their child is doing at each developmental stage. The book covers a wide range of issues including international adoption, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, and learning disabilities, and combines sound theory and direct advice with case examples throughout.

Upcoming Virtual Meetings, Trainings & Events

ADOPTIVE FAMILY SUPPORT GROUP

When: Second Tuesday of Every Month from 6:00 – 7:30 PM

Where: Virtual Training – Zoom

Facilitator: Joy Davies from the Attachment Coalition



We are so excited to have Joy Davies leading our monthly support group! Joy provides professional counseling to individuals, families and groups. Her primary focus centers around issues relating to developmental trauma, adoption and attachment disorders. She made the professional transition to counseling as a result of being an adoptive parent herself for the past 20 years. She understands a parent's desire to restore and/or maintain peace in their homes and to create environments that are supportive to healthy parent and child relationships.

Matters of Race: A Conversation about Race in America and Its Impacts on Transracial Adoptions

When: Saturday, February 19, 2022 & Saturday February 26, 2022 from 10 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Where: 24901 Northwestern Hwy, Ste. 600, Southfield, MI 48075,

OR via Zoom: Meeting ID: 874 0274 0930 / Passcode: Zns8rs

Facilitators: Michael Williams (Orchards Children's Services CEO), Mr. Potts and Mrs. Knox-Potts (Adoptive Parents), and additionally, a transracial adoptive parent and expert trainer on the topic of transracial adoption will also be present.

Day 1: our trainers will utilize the time to educate and answer questions about race relations in America and provide effective parent tools for families that have adopted transracially.

Day 2: we will have a healing circle and will offer a parent / child panel of transracial adoptees and adoptive parents.



**Paul Potts &
Ayana Knox-Potts**
(Adoptive Parents)

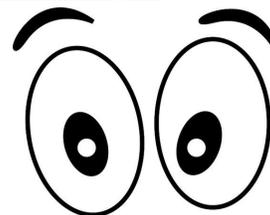


Michael Williams
(OCS – CEO)

Parent Conference with Annie Lange

When: Saturday, April 9, 2022

Be on the lookout for further details!



We are continuously working on adding trainings and activities, (and have a few things in the works!) Please keep an eye out for updates via email and social media!

