



"Building a Community of Care for Children, Families and Providers"

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December honors National Stress-Free Family Holidays Month



Spotlight on DePelchin Children's Center



Reducing Family Stress Around the Winter Holidays

by Megan Green, LCSW-S
Program Coordinator-
Parenting Help Program
DePelchin Children's Center

The holidays can provide a great opportunity for families to spend time together, reconnect, and reflect on the year that is coming to an end. For many families, however, the holidays can also be stressful. Feelings of stress might erupt from the chaos of rushing children around to activities or from the quiet moments when we are reminded of loved ones who are no longer there to celebrate. One of the most important

“We strengthen the lives of children by enhancing their mental health and physical well-being.”

DePelchin Children’s Center believes that every child deserves to be safe and healthy. An accredited foster care and adoption agency, DePelchin serves the most vulnerable children and families in Texas and works to break the cycles of abuse and neglect. Our approach to caring for children integrates prevention, foster care, adoption and post-adoption programs to improve the mental health and physical well-being of children who are at risk of entering or are in the State’s child welfare system. Founded in 1892, DePelchin is a nonprofit organization with locations throughout Houston and across Texas and gratefully receives support from individuals, foundations, corporations, government grants and the United Way.

For more information, please visit <https://www.depelchin.org/>



Recognizing Holiday Triggers of Trauma

Originally published on Voices from the Field-SAMHSA

Year-round, we encourage providers to adopt a trauma-informed lens—to use knowledge of trauma and its impact to make decisions about all aspects of their relationships with clients and how they run their program.

During the holiday season, the need for a trauma-informed approach is critical. Everywhere we turn, we’re reminded that it is supposed to be “the most wonderful time of the year.” While for some that may be true, yet for others the holiday season is wrought with triggers such as songs, scents, and rituals. Then there is pressure to conform to particular social and familial expectations, increased presence of alcohol, and more interactions with family and friends. For those experiencing homelessness, the holidays may also serve as a reminder of what does not exist—a home in which to celebrate, cook, decorate, and rejoice.

Children are typically out of school during the holidays, therefore parents may be eager to spend quality time with their children, but struggle to find adequate time in the daily rush of schedules. We recommend that families focus on “quality” versus “quantity” time. While cooking an evening meal, use the opportunity to show your child what you are doing. Children as young as 2 years old begin expressing their desire to help, and this is a chance for them to feel included. For example, have your child count the number of items that go into a recipe, give them food that they can safely touch and discuss, and allow them to set the table. Including your child in these activities allows you to continue with necessary tasks while simultaneously teaching skills and spending time together.

Parents can begin fostering healthy development in this area by teaching their children skills in everyday routines. One way of doing this is to include your child in a specific “problem” or decision you need to make. For example, you have just learned that you will be receiving two additional guests in your home for the holidays and you are not sure how to prepare sleeping arrangements. Try presenting the problem to your child and ask them to come up with three possible solutions. When the guests arrive, have the child select which solution they feel is best. If the problem proceeds, allow them to suggest their next best option. Parents should also have a follow up discussion to reiterate the importance of planning ahead and learning from choices that were made.

Praising your child for their good behavior helps support your child in developing a better understanding of how you want them to behave. We often use the common phrases “good job” and “thank you,” but we aren’t really describing which behavior we are praising. Instead, try to describe your praise by saying: “Thank you for picking up your toys!” or “Nice job in helping your sister get her coat on!” As a bonus, try this on your partner or other family member. You may find that it is also well appreciated by them.

Parents can often mitigate some of the risk of inappropriate behavior with a routine and plan. The *Triple P: Positive Parenting Program* recommends that parents create a list of what is needed prior to an activity. This plan should include rules, activities, rewards and consequences. Start off by telling your child where you will be going, when you will be going, and what the expectations will be. For a grocery store shopping trip, rules such as “staying inside or close to the shopping cart, using inside voices, keeping hands to self” might be appropriate. Allow your child to bring a simple toy or activity that will keep them busy during the trip. You might also use the

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Loss, loneliness, and shame are powerful triggers.

So what can we do?

- Think about how the holiday season impacts you, the service provider. Are you in a frenzy, hopping from turkey donations to a sudden influx of volunteers to clients in crisis? What are your own holiday triggers? Take time to notice your own responses.
- Ask yourself, “What helps and what hurts?” As you work with clients and your team, be aware in every instance, you have an opportunity to interact in a trauma-informed way. Asking “What helps and what hurts?” can be a good gut-check. Sure, local honor society students may want to sponsor a gift-giving drive for the kids in your program, but ask yourself: Is that what the kids (and their parents) need right now? How could we set it up so that it doesn’t feel shaming? What could we do instead?
- Plan now. Talk with your team and clients now about what the holidays may bring up for them. By being proactive, you are being trauma-informed. Even if clients have nothing to say, you have opened the door for conversation. And by talking to your team, you can be prepared as a staff to support one another and those you serve.
- Pay attention to nutrition and exercise. Cookies, pies, and cake —oh my! Taking care of one’s body is good self-care advice no matter the season, but with additional stress and temptation everywhere, be more mindful about eating and exercise habits. Be sure to drink plenty of water. Indulge in sweets, caffeine, and alcohol in moderation. Go for a walk. Talk with clients about these habits too, as part of routine conversations on good self-care.
- Create meaningful rituals. This is a great opportunity to involve clients. Let them be your guide. Ask yourself how to celebrate, with your team and your program, in ways that relieve stress rather than add to it.

opportunity to teach them how to problem solve a dilemma or engage them by having them count, such as “how many oranges are in the basket.” Lastly, make sure that your child is aware of a reward that will be earned for following the rules. Rewards might include monetary items, such as a snack or allowing them to enjoy their favorite activity after returning home. Consequences can simply be the removal of the reward!

No matter what the holiday season looks like for your family, it is important for you to take care of yourself as the parent. If you feel that you are giving 100% to your children, then you are leaving very little for yourself. Taking as little as five minutes each day to reflect, enjoy a preferred activity, or even practice deep breathing can greatly benefit your mental health and well-being. Always keep in mind that your child is learning about their world from you. You hold the power to teach them how to be resilient and kind.

1. **Help your child learn to problem solve**
2. **Spend quality time together**
3. **Praise your child for their good behavior**
4. **Have a plan for activities**
5. **Practice self-care**



Holiday Expectations

by Erin Spalding, LCSW
Program Director-
The Christi Center

As the winter holidays approach, we are surrounded by words such as joy, cheer and merriment. There are bright, colorful lights, holiday fairs and events, family gatherings and, for many, a break from work to enjoy the festivities. Naturally, portraying happiness during this season can feel like the expectation. For many, this leads to disappointment and guilt surrounding the challenges that may come with our holiday celebrations.

Numerous circumstances can create pressure around the holidays. Having the financial stability to provide food for a large family gathering, buying gifts, and even juggling schedules to create quality time, are not a given for everyone. Even for those fortunate enough to have resources and ample time, work may require them to be

- Remember the principles of trauma-informed care. Healing happens in relationships. Recovery is possible. Support client control, choice, and autonomy.

Volk, K. (2016, April 19). Recognizing Holiday Triggers of Trauma. *Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration*. Retrieved from: <https://www.samhsa.gov/homelessness-programs-resources/hpr-resources/recognizing-holiday-triggers>

away from family and friends. For others, the holidays can be a painful reminder of who cannot be present. Those who have lost someone to death, or those whose loved ones are out of reach due to incarceration, deportation, or deployment, likely feel a range of emotions, many of which are difficult to cope with.

Of course, this does not mean that facing hardship must prevent us from enjoying the holidays. It simply means that we should be aware of how expectations for a perfect, challenge-free season of celebration can actually lead to increased stress. Instead, we can recognize that all emotions are acceptable and that the holidays will look different for every one – ourselves included.

There is no singular “right way” to participate this season. Try balancing expectations with honest communication about both the challenges and comfort of the holidays. Remaining compassionate with ourselves and others is the best way to find moments of peace.

New TICC Co-Chair: Sarah Rees, LCSW

Congratulations to Sarah Rees, LCSW, who was selected to be the new Co-Chair of TICC!

A four-year TICC member, Sarah is the Austin Field Director for Casey Family Programs. She joined Casey Family Programs a year ago from The Safe Alliance, where she served as the Senior Director of Counseling and Therapeutic Services. Sarah has cultivated extensive experience over the past 14 years in diverse settings that include mental health outreach for adults experiencing homelessness and therapeutic work with youth and young adults in CPS/foster care. Sarah has a vast understanding of how symptoms of childhood trauma affect individuals throughout their lives and the impact trauma can have on relationships and daily functioning. Her main focus of work is in Trauma-Informed Care, how trauma affects attachment throughout life spans, and supporting other therapeutic professionals in regards to secondary trauma and compassion fatigue.



Sarah Rees, LCSW

Upcoming Trainings

National Childhood Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) online course: Holidays, Celebrations and Traumatically Bereaved Children
Ongoing
Learn more [here](#).

January

Austin Center for Grief and Loss 2020 Professional Conference

TRLA

Texas RioGrande Legal Aid

TRLA provides free legal services to low-income individuals for civil legal

January 31, 2020, 9am-3:30pm
Austin, TX
Learn more [here](#).

February

29th Annual Texas School Social Workers Conference
February 26- 28, 2020
Doubletree by Hilton Austin
Learn more [here](#).

Add TICC to Your List Serve

To have your agency's upcoming trainings featured in our newsletter, please contact:

ticc@austinchildguidance.org

problems.

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Blanco, Burnet, Caldwell, Hays,
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**The Trauma-Informed Care Consortium is funded by:
St. David's Foundation**



Please join TICC for our next quarterly meeting:

Wednesday January 29, 2020
9:00 am-10:30 am
Location: TBD

Please check traumatexas.com for updates!

TICC listserv members will receive an RSVP link in the coming months.

TICC Members

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Seanna Crosbie
Austin Child Guidance Center

Co-Chair

Sarah Rees
Casey Family Programs

Organizational Members

A World For Children
Austin Travis County Health & Human Services
AISD Comprehensive Health
Allies Against Slavery
Amerigroup
Any Baby Can
APD Victim Services & Violent Crimes
Armstrong Community Music School
Arrow
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Foundation Communities
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Helping Hand Home
Hope Rising
Integral Care
Kids in a New Groove
KIPP
LifeWorks
Literacy Coalition of Central Texas
Lone Star Circle of Care
Lone Star Victims Advocacy Project
Manor ISD
Maximus-Sare/Star Plus
Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute
Mission Capital
NAMI Austin
Out Youth
Partnerships for Childrne
Pathways Youth and Family Services
People's Community Clinic
Pflugerville ISD
Phoenix House
Planned Parenthood
Refugee Services of Texas
Round Rock ISD
SAFE Alliance
Sage Recovery & Wellness Center
Saint Louise House
Samaritan Center
Seedling Foundation
Seton Healthcare Family
Shoal Creek (Child/Adolescent Unit)
South Texas Childrens Home
Southwest Key Program
Spirit Reins
St. David's Foundation
St. David's Children's Hospital
STARRY
Superior Healthplan
Supreme Court of Texas Children's Commission
Taylor ISD
Texans Care for Children
Texas Appleseed
Texas CASA
Texas Family Voice Network
Texas Institute for Child & Family Wellbeing
Texas RioGrande Legal Aid
The Settlement Home
TNOYS

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