

A HOLIDAY LETTER TO OUR FAMILY

A Holiday Letter to Our Family helps prepare your extended family for some of the behaviors and challenges your child impacted by trauma, may exhibit during holiday gatherings. It provides connection focused, proactive support ideas while protecting their history and story. A little preparation can truly go a long way towards a more peaceful holiday season!

Dear Family Member,

The holidays are such a special time for connection and celebration, and we're grateful to spend them with you. We also appreciate your desire to support our family on our foster care/adoption journey.

To help our extended family prepare for our upcoming holiday gatherings, we wanted to let you know that for children who have experienced trauma, the season can often bring unique challenges. We want to share a little bit about what this might look like and ways we work together to make our holiday gatherings a positive experience for everyone.

We will keep the details of our child's history private, but it is likely that you will see some behaviors that stem from experiencing early childhood trauma. This has impacted them in a couple of key ways.

We've seen this show up through:

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We've found some ways to help are:

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We hope this information helps us all feel prepared and better equipped to support our family during the festivities. We want to encourage and equip you to build a positive relationship with our child and are excited about how our extended family can help them on their healing journey. We are happy to try to answer any questions you might have, while also respecting the privacy of their story.

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“Dear Family Member” Letter Examples:

Here are a few examples of how you can utilize the prompts to help your extended family better understand your child’s needs and ways to support them.

We’ve seen this show up through:

It has heightened their sensitivity to large crowds and new faces. When this happens, they might become withdrawn, overly energetic, or experience a meltdown.

We’ve found some ways to help are:

Allowing them to take breaks as needed, whether that is stepping outside for fresh air or retreating to a quiet space. Simple activities like getting a cold drink or favorite snack can really help.

We’ve seen this show up through:

It has impacted the way their body receives sensory input causing them to avoid unfamiliar smells or textures. They may not want to eat some traditional holiday dishes or may only eat familiar foods.

We’ve found some ways to help are:

We won’t force them to eat foods that they are uncomfortable with or finish what is on their plate. We will encourage them to try things as they are able, but will also bring and offer some of their favorite snacks throughout the day.

We’ve seen this show up through:

Unknown triggers causing big reactions. Seemingly small upsets or everyday situations, like a change in plans may result in what seems like an out of proportion reaction.

We’ve found some ways to help are:

Letting them lead decide what feels comfortable with participation or physical contact. Sticking to a predictable schedule when possible and giving them warning before transitions or if plans need to change.

We’ve seen this show up through:

Resistance to a new environment which may look like unwillingness to participate in activities, lack of engagement in conversation, or appearing to not be listening.

We’ve found some ways to help are:

Letting them observe before joining in and avoiding putting them on the spot by asking direct questions or trying to force things like eye contact or participation in a conversation or game.