



Kids & Families Together

December 2011

Children & Stress During the Holidays

Tips on Combating Stress

Kids & Families Together cannot stress the importance of spending time with your family and strengthening lasting bonds, not only with your child, but among siblings as well. The holiday season seems to be the perfect time to emphasize this. Encourage older children to spend quality time with their younger siblings. Have them do special activities together, like completing a project or reading together. Activities such as these will also develop cooperation, patience, and a sense of accomplishment within your children.

Siblings also tend to fight; it is a fact that should not be disregarded.

This may be stressful to you as a parent or caregiver, especially during the holiday season. Kids & Families Together would like to provide you with helpful resources and tips to recognize signs of stress and help alleviate it as well.

Pay attention to your body. Head/body aches, fatigue, over-eating or under-eating, unusual weight gain or loss and moodiness are all ways your body is telling you to take a break. This may mean taking a nap, partaking in a hobby you enjoy, exercising or simply saying “no” when you have the option. At times you may not even feel stressed, but your body is signaling that you need to slow



down.

Discover how you react to stress.

Take note of how stressful situations effect you emotionally, physically and mentally. Do you find yourself lashing out or neglecting your children? Becoming more forgetful? irritable? unable to concentrate? These may be some ways you react to the stressors thrust upon you. When you find yourself acting or feeling

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Having Faith

Dear Faith,

I am a single mom who adopted my 13 year old daughter when she was two. I always attempted to make the subject of adoption one that could easily be talked about within our home. When my daughter was quite young, she enjoyed hearing her adoption story and telling her story to others.

At about the age of eight, she stopped talking about adoption until recently when she began to ask questions and talk about adoption once again. Now that Lana is thirteen and a teenager she expresses more anger than in her earlier years, and I am wondering if this is normal.

Mother of a teen in Moorpark

Dear Mother in Moorpark,

Often very young children enjoy hearing their adoption story. Many young children can tell the story verbatim as it was told to them but do not really understand the words. For example, the concepts of growing “inside the birth mother’s tummy” and living with another family are very abstract and unintelligible to the young child. Children under the age of seven are magical thinkers and often believe that they caused their birth parents to “abandon” them. Young children may believe they cried too much or were too ugly or

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Kids & Families Together’s mission is to strengthen relationships and provide safe, supportive help and education to keep family members emotionally connected to one another.

IN OUR COMMUNITY

A look at what's happening this month

December has arrived. The last month of the year is a time to be spent with friends and family and reflect on the ups and downs of the past twelve months. Add more memories to your December this year by taking part in some (or all) of these events with your family.

December 3, 9am-6:30pm **4th Annual Tamale Festival** inside Oxnard's historic Plaza Park located at 500 South C Street. Admission is free. Come sample some of the best tamales in Ventura County. Proceeds will go to support local recreation programming including Oxnard City Corps and Oxnard Police Activities League.

December 3, **San Buenaventura Mission Tree Lighting**. 225 E Main St. Celebrate the decorating and lighting of the mission tree. Along with caroling by local church groups, it's rumored that Santa Claus will ride into Downtown Ventura on a fire engine to greet the children. This event is free.

December 3-26, Ride the **North Pole Express** out of Fillmore, where children and adults alike will be enchanted as they venture to the North Pole to visit Santa. Caroling, story-telling by elves, cookies and chocolate milk for everyone on board. 346 Main St, Fillmore, select Wednesday-Sunday trains, adults \$29, children 2-12 \$19 (under 2 FREE). For reservations and details contact: reservations@fwry.com or (805) 524-2546

December 10, **46th Annual Channel Islands Harbor Parade of Lights**. Make it an all day affair with Snow Play, meetings with Mr. & Mrs. Clause beginning at 10am or just stop by for the parade at 7pm.

December 10, **Santa's Village Holiday Carnival** will be held at the Camarillo Community Center beginning at 10am. Enjoy the live entertainment, food, arts & crafts and more. Santa will hold a meet and greet with the children from 2-4pm. Don't miss out on this fun free event! 1605 Burnley St. Camarillo

December 10-25, **Oxnard's Christmas Tree Lane**, stroll through one of Ventura County's largest holiday light displays in the Henry T. Oxnard National Historic District. Nightly displays from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m., F & G Streets between 5th & Palm.

December 16 & 17, **Ventura Harbor Parade of Lights**. Boats will be beautifully decorated and lit up for the two-day fun filled event with a Winter Wonderland & Sidewalk Sale. Lighted boat parade and firework show begin at 7pm. Admission is free.

December 25, **Chanukah Festival at Ventura Harbor** from 3-5pm. Join the celebration with music, hot latkes, a boutique and the lighting of a 20ft menorah.



Keeping up with Kids & Families

There are a number of ways to stay in loop with what's going on at Kids & Families Together. If you are reading this, you're already one step ahead!

You can also Like us on Facebook, send us a tweet on Twitter @KandFT, Follow us on LinkedIn, check out our calendar on our website, give us a call or stop by our center.



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this way, it's time to focus on what the cause is.

Isolate the cause. Stress may be caused by a number of factors; financial troubles, additional family members that you find yourself caring for, relationship troubles, loss or sickness of a loved one, a new (or loss of) a job, or trying to balance work and family. Whether it is one or a combination of these stressors, it's important to identify what is causing anxiety in your life in order to combat it efficiently and effectively. Remember, how you manage your stress influences your child's level of stress and how they cope with it. Talk with them and work through possible solutions so you all can stay emotionally, physically and mentally healthy.

Enjoy the season with friends and family and don't let stress take over your life. It may be difficult, but staying positive, prioritizing and having the right attitude can make a difference. Happy Holidays!



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in some way offended their birth parents that caused these people to leave their lives permanently. In other words, children assume responsibility for the adult decisions and behaviors that led to adoption.

By the time children are eight their ability to think in abstract terms increases dramatically. At this point, children comprehend the meaning behind the words in their adoption story. By this time the child is aware that a significant loss has occurred. Children at this stage of development may refuse to talk about adoption as a form of denial, or they may be concerned about showing disloyalty to the adoptive family. Even though children in this stage may not be talking about adoption, they are most likely thinking about it. While the child should not be forced to discuss adoption-related issues, she should be aware that her parent is open and comfortable with the topic. For example, on your daughter's birthday you can say to her, "I always think about your birth mom on your birthday and I wonder if you think about her as well?" She may say "No" which is OK

but she also might surprise you and say "Yes." No matter what her response, she knows that it is OK to think about her birth mom and even talk about her since you are modeling for your daughter that talking about adoption is a comfortable topic for you.

Now that your daughter is an early adolescent, she is working on two important developmental tasks: identity formation and separation/individuation. Both tasks are challenging for all young people, and both are impacted by adoption. Identity formation begins as a youth examines her own roots and questions her beginnings and begins to experiment with identities different than those of her parents. The adopted youth continues to work on resolution of her grief that began with the realization of her loss during an earlier developmental stage. The second stage of grieving is anger. The adopted youth enters this stage of grieving at the same time that she is rejecting her family's iden-

tity and support. While adolescence can be an angry period for all young people, it is often even more intense for the adopted person. Many parents find that the anger begins to build when the child is around twelve years old (even younger for some girls) and peaks when the child reaches thirteen or fourteen. As challenging as this stage of development can be for the parent, it is important to stay calm and present for your child and to remember that like all stages, this stage is temporary.

Faith



THANK YOU!

Kids and Families Together would like to thank Sunny of Four Seasons Cleaners in Ventura for the generous donation of 100 jackets and coats. These items will be distributed to our families and keep them warm in the coming winter months. Thanks again from the bottom of our hearts!

Training Opportunities

from Ventura County Community College District's Foster & Kinship Care Education

The ABC's of AB12— Perhaps you've heard it said "AB12 changes everything"...and although it may not change everything, it will allow youth to remain in foster until age 21 (under certain conditions). This workshop will provide an introductory overview of the history of the legislation, eligibility, implementation, participation requirements and conditions and describe the role of caregivers. All foster parents and guardians, especially those who care for children over the age of 16, are highly encouraged to attend! Dinner is included. Space is limited and all are welcome, but priority will go to Foster & Kinship Parents (2 training hours provided) who pre-register by Dec 5. Wednesday Dec 7, 5100 Adolfo Rd, Camarillo Dinner 5:30-6, Workshop 6-8pm

Cornerstone Training Network: Holiday Preparation for Your Child's Heart —

Holiday celebrations are times of excitement, expectations and stress. This workshop will explore some of the ways parents can use these celebrations to strengthen family bonds. We will share practical ideas for keeping the celebrations simple instead of overwhelming, setting realistic expectations, avoiding inequality, and providing emotional, and physical safety for your children. December 10, 9-11am. 2080 Winifred St Simi Valley, Corner Stone Church Rm 10.

Visit kidsandfamilies.org/calendar for more information

K&FT Staff Spotlight: Tricia Durni

Our staff members play a critical role in maintaining the everyday flow of Kids & Families Together. They are kind, nurturing and here to serve their community.



Tricia Durni , In-Home Program Coordinator & Butterfly Whisperer

You're title is In-Home Program Coordinator, what does that even mean?

Good question!

I receive referrals from various agencies and individuals for our In-Home programs. I am the first contact that the clients have with In-Home clinical services. I work closely with the Clinical Program Director, Dianne Nicholas, to provide administrative support, build relationships and do presentations with county and community contractors. I also team up with the In-Home Program Administrator, Karina Garcia and EPSDT Program Coordinator, Alex Lemus to coordinate services, develop projects and implement programs.

What is your favorite part of the day at K & FT?

My favorite part of the day is making contact with the clients. I love being able to be the first person they talk to and provide them with a safe place to talk about their situations. It makes me happy when they feel like someone is listening to them and that there is hope.

What's your spirit animal?

I would say butterfly. I always notice when they are around and delight in watching them fly and play. To me, butterflies represent change or transformation and the reminder of all the joyful and beautiful things in the universe. I recently had a butterfly land on my knee and stay there for quite a while. One of my friends said, "That would only happen to you!"

Pen? Clicky or with a cap?

ALWAYS CLICKY! Something I am VERY particular about (haha!)