

HANDLING HOLIDAY STRESS



Project **1.27**

Fostering and Adopting in Faith

HANDLING HOLIDAY STRESS

How are you holding up through the busiest holiday month? Feeling anxious or stressed? Worried about how to balance activities with family and foster kids? Take a deep breath. Pause for a moment of self-assessment and think through what you might need to help you handle the holiday stress. H.A.L.T. is a quick tool you can use when you notice you're feeling stressed.

AM I HUNGRY?

AM I ANGRY?

AM I LONELY?

AM I TIRED?

This is a simple self-assessment that can serve as a good starting point to identify stress in the moment. Sometimes taking a simple first step can begin the process of working through bigger stressors that are looming. Everything is harder to process when we are hungry, angry, lonely, or tired. So, once this initial stress is identified, take steps to address it. Then when you are able to move forward, set up a plan to head off future stressors.

HERE ARE SOME IDEAS TO HELP WITH UPCOMING HOLIDAY STRESS:

Create a Family Line. Plan ahead and have a set response for hard or uncomfortable questions. Our family calls these "the family line." When we are asked "Who is the extra kid?", we give a family line. When we are asked "How long are the extra kids going to be with you?", we give a family line. Rather than having to fumble through uncomfortable questions in the moment, ease the stress by having a plan in place. Try having a family meeting and coming up with some responses everyone is comfortable with giving. They should be short and to the point. If your children get more questions after answering, have them practice responding, "You can ask my parents."

Honor an Exit Strategy. The holidays often involve extra gatherings and while these can be fun, they can be stressful. It can be helpful to plan an exit strategy. If children in your care get overwhelmed, let them know if they come to you and need a way out, you will honor that need. It might mean leaving earlier than planned, letting them sit with you for a little while, or taking them outside for some fresh air.

HANDLING HOLIDAY STRESS

Stay Connected. Another way to help with holiday stress is staying connected with your family and support team. Set a regular check-in time with those in your home as well as your support network. Plan some slow, downtime activities amidst all the hustle and bustle. Try to think of calm, connective activities like cuddling on the couch for a movie night, reading a book together or planning time for regular walks around the neighborhood.

Fresh Air Reset. Plan regular opportunities to get fresh air. Open a window in the afternoon, sit outside and have a cup of coffee or go for a hike. Research has shown that fresh air boosts brain activity and helps us self-regulate.