

mental  
fear  
victim  
isolation  
anger  
physical  
sexual  
abuse  
rape  
assault  
safe house  
education  
society  
economic  
partner  
justice  
police  
help  
harm  
regret  
alcohol  
punishment

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

*Editor's Note: While this is written for foster families, I think the reminders and advice are very relevant to CASAs.*

So many dates on the calendar, so many reasons to celebrate, so many different ways. Christmas, Hanukkah, New Years, Kwanzaa; these are times that can be extremely difficult for many foster children. During this time of Holiday Cheer, many foster children are faced

Foster parents can best help their child in foster care by spending some time and talking about the holiday. Perhaps the holiday being celebrated in their new home is one that their birth family never celebrated, or is a holiday that is unfamiliar with them. Let the foster child know how your family celebrates the holiday, what traditions your family celebrate, and include the child in it. Ask your child in foster care about some of the traditions that his family had, and try to include some of them into your own home during the holiday. This will help him not only feel more comfortable in your own home during this time, but also remind him that he is important, and that his birth family is important, as well. Even if his traditions are ones that you do not celebrate in your own home, try to include some of his into your own holiday celebration, in some way and some fashion.

There are a number of other ways foster parents can help the children place in their home during this time of year, as well as reach out and help the birth families of these children. This IS the season of giving, and we are all called to give unto others. With a little preparation beforehand from you, this season of joy can be a wonderful time for your child from foster care, one that may last in his memory for a life time, as well as in your memory, too. After all, the gift of I

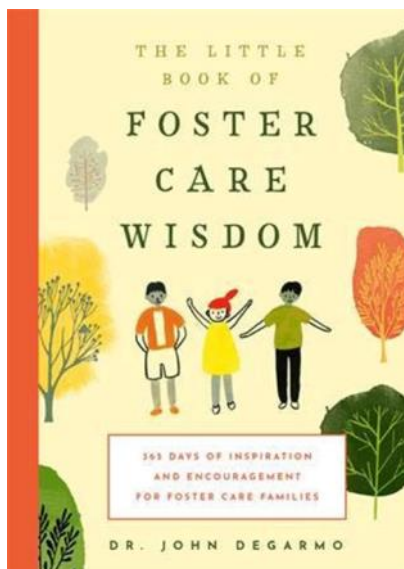
**For Zoom link**

Continued from Page 1

### Christmas and the Holidays: A Time of Joy and Sorrow for Children in Foster Care (continued)

Love is one that can be shared, not only during the holidays, but all year long, with the child, with the family, and with all we meet. May you experience this joy and may you share it with others.

**Dr. John DeGarmo is an international expert on foster care and TEDx Speaker. He and his wife have had over 60 children come through their home as foster parents. He is a consultant to foster care agencies, child welfare organizations, and legal firms, as well as a speaker and trainer on many topics about the foster care system.**



#### The Little Book of Foster Care Wisdom: 365 Days of Inspiration and Encouragement for Foster Care Families

By Dr. John DeGarmo

Foster parenting is both a rewarding and a challenging job, a lifestyle of continuous learning and new experiences, and Daily Inspirations for Foster Care Families will be there to support you as you, in turn, support your foster children.

Filled with 365 days' worth of daily tips, inspirational quotes, and motivational short stories from a foster care expert, this book is a must-read for modern child-welfare advocates, adoptive parents, and foster parents. It provides inspirational content every day, including instructions, tips, anecdotes, and more.

### Happy Holidays!

The holidays are filled with good will and cheer, but you bring that to our office year-round. We



are so appreciative of that, and we can't wait to see you again next year. May your season be merry and bright, and your new year filled with delight! Season's greetings from the very merry team at Allen County CASA!

## December Training Opportunities

**The Effects of Domestic Violence on Children and How to Work with Children Who've Been Exposed to Violence,**  
Wednesday, December 6th at 12 noon via Zoom. Email Cindy.Verduce@allensuperiorcourt.us to receive Zoom Link.

**Through the Eyes of the Child: Exploring Protective Factors and Supporting Resiliency**

December 13 at 1:00 – 2:00 pm ET [Register](#)

**Addressing the Stigma: Youth Mental Health and Substance Use** December 13, 2023, from 12p-1p EST. (Virtual) [REGISTER HERE](#)



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### New Recordings Added to Website:

**Mental Health Essentials — Please use 10167 for local program code.**

Webinar Materials Part One: [Slide deck](#) [Recording](#)

Webinar Materials Part Two: [Slide deck](#) [Recording](#)

Looking for a recording of a previous training,  
check [www.allencountycasa.org](http://www.allencountycasa.org) under the “Training” tab.

## How to Take the Stress Out of Family Gatherings

Holidays are supposed to be happy family events, but a lot of times they can be very stressful. Here are some things parents can do to help the holidays go more smoothly.

A lot of behavior problems can be avoided by telling your kids exactly what you expect of them at an aunt or grandparent's house. It's good to be as specific as possible. It's just as important to let your relatives and friends know what to expect of your child. And it's good to let them know that it's not up to them to criticize or fix your kid.

If your child is easily over-stimulated by noise and people, it's a good idea to find a place where they can go to just chill out and take a break. For kids with lots of extra energy, giving them plenty of activities to do in the car and taking breaks to let them run around can help.

Kids who don't like to be touched or hugged or don't like to talk around people they don't know shouldn't be made to do so. And relatives hosting gatherings should be told what a child's limits are and not demand more.

If you have a child who's a picky eater, you might want to bring some food they really like, especially if the holiday is centered around a meal. You can still encourage them to try something new, but that way you'll know they won't go hungry.

All parents would love it if their kids became best friends with cousins they see on holidays. But that doesn't happen just because kids are the same age. Parents can show kids that even if they don't really like a relative, they still need to be polite. Know that no holiday is going to be perfect. If you and your child can come away with one or two good memories, you've done a good job.

## Giving Gratitude A Try



Did you know that gratitude can increase happiness? According to experts at [Harvard Medical School](#), "Gratitude helps people feel more positive emotions, relish good experiences, improve their health, deal with adversity and build strong relationships." Whether it's preventing the [winter blues](#), managing [holiday stress](#) or just improving overall well-being and experience of life, a gratitude practice is an excellent addition to your daily routine. LeeAnn Hoffman, wellness coach, Parkview MyWell-Being, has some helpful tips for putting thankfulness into practice.

### What does it mean to practice gratitude?

Gratitude is the act of noticing and appreciating all the positive things in your life. A gratitude practice is training yourself to notice and appreciate those good things, then expressing gratitude for them. This shifts your perspective so you begin to notice and appreciate all the good things around you and you start to think more positively as a result.

### How do I begin a gratitude practice?

There are several ways to introduce more appreciation into your routine. Here are four of my fa-

vorites:

**Write it out.** A gratitude journal is a great place to start. In fact, there are several journals on the market that include prompts and activities to encourage a structured gratitude practice. You can also simply purchase a journal or notebook and develop your own practice. You can write a list, complete a journal entry or even write a letter to someone you appreciate. Dr. Martin E. P. Seligman, a psychologist at the University of Pennsylvania, tested how gratitude impacted students who took a moment to thank someone in their life and the results were more effective in shaping the students' happiness than any other intervention, with some positive effects lasting more than a month.

**Meditate about it.** If writing isn't your thing, you can simply meditate on gratitude. Formal meditation or a moment of gratitude can shift your perspective. An easy way to [meditate](#) on gratitude is to take 1-2 minutes during your day and notice what you are grateful for. This might be related to what's around you: "In this moment, I am grateful I have a roof over my head, the color of my room, this soft blanket," etc. Or, it might pertain to your life overall: "I am so thankful for my family, that moment of laughter earlier," etc. You can do this while brushing your teeth, making a meal, in a stressful moment to release tension or in a quiet moment of your day. You can also create a more formal practice meditating each day with guided meditation or a dedicated time, space and intention.

**Tap into your senses.** Another way to practice gratitude is through mindfulness. [Mindfulness](#) is a practice that allows us to be present in the current moment without judgement. We do not allow ourselves to think about the future (anxiety) or worry about the past (guilt),

and instead we enjoy [the moment](#) and live more fully. You can practice [this technique](#) even during simple tasks such as [driving](#) your car or washing the dishes. Focus on your senses: What do you feel? What do you smell? What do you see? What do you taste? What do you hear? If you find yourself thinking about something else and falling out of the present moment, bring your awareness back to the moment. This may take some practice, but it will become easier with time.

**Simplify your surroundings.** A final suggestion for implementing a gratitude practice is to declutter and live more simply. Getting rid of items that are cluttering your space will allow you to truly enjoy the items you have. The decluttering process grants you time to assess how your possessions contribute to your life. You might stumble upon old memories and possessions that remind you of good times. The things you decide to keep are the possessions that are helpful, necessary and bring you joy, while the ones you get rid of are only bringing anxiety, clutter and stress. Items you no longer need may be donated to a good cause and help others as well.

Take the Gratitude Challenge Find a gratitude practice that works for you. Whether it's practicing mindfulness, purchasing a structured gratitude journal or throwing away items that no longer serve you, it's easy to practice gratitude and increase your overall well-being.



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