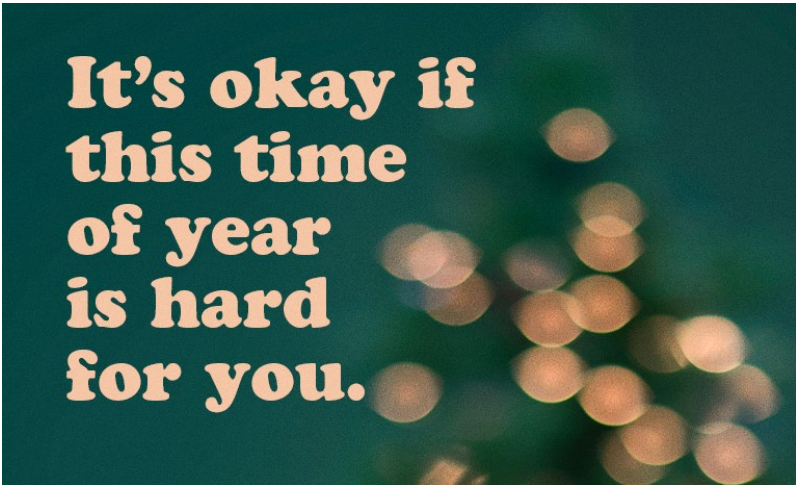


NAVIGATING THE HOLIDAYS

It's that time of year again - the world feels merry and bright, so why don't I? There's nothing wrong with you if you're not diving head-first into a holiday season full of joy and excitement. For many, especially children with mental health needs or trauma, the holidays may stir feelings of loss, sadness, unmet expectations, anxiety, and depression. Children in foster care or out-of-home placements may experience these uncomfortable emotions even more. They may not understand why they feel a certain way around the holidays or may even feel guilty that they are not happy when they feel like they should.

As caregivers or providers in these children's lives, it is important to have conversations about these feelings around the holiday season. Giving kids the space, time and help they need to communicate their thoughts and feelings is the best thing that we can do for them.

This year may pose some additional challenges for us, our families, and the families we serve. Please take time to consider how to best care for your own wellbeing while making holiday plans. Caring for ourselves and each other is the best way to survive the holidays.



**It's okay if
this time
of year
is hard
for you.**



NAVIGATING THE HOLIDAYS *continued*

Resources

- [Safety Planning for a Trauma Informed Holiday Season](#) (8 min read) - article discussing how to use the Safety, Emotion, Loss, Future (SELF) tool for trauma-informed holiday planning.
- [Depression During the Holidays](#) (5 min read) - article discussing why depression is so prevalent during the holidays, and how to care for yourself and others.
- [The Holidays: When Things Get Rough](#) (8 min read) - Testimonials from children in foster care about their experiences with the holidays.
- [Cam Heyward's Story](#) (15 min watch) - Cam Heyward, Pittsburgh Steelers All-Pro Defensive End and 2024 NFL Walter Payton Man of the Year and his mom share their story of losing Cam's dad, Craig "Ironhead" Heyward, to brain cancer when Cam was a teenager. The two share about their grief journeys, breaking the news to Cam and his younger siblings, and how they navigate the holidays.
- ["The Holidays with Adopted, Foster, or Kinship Kids Who've Been Exposed to Trauma"—Creating a Family Podcast](#) (35 min listen) - In this episode, Rebecca Robotham, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker at Beehive Counseling & Wellness, speaks from her experience as an adoptee and former foster child.
- [How to Deal With Difficult Relatives Over the Holidays - The New York Times](#) (10 min read)
- ["Western PA experts offer tips on navigating lingering election-related tensions over holidays" - Trib Live](#) (12 min read)
- [How to Approach the Holidays with People You Deeply Disagree With - NPR Code Switch](#) (5 min read)
- [Highmark Caring Place](#) (Explore at your own pace) - Highmark Caring Place provides free support groups for grieving children and families in Pittsburgh, as well as tons of other resources for children, families, and providers. Check out their website for online resources, program information, events, and online webinars (recorded and upcoming).

