



A Foster Child's Holiday Season



Krista Vecchione, MA

With the holidays in full swing, it may leave you wondering what the holiday season is like for youth who are in foster care. Well, this can be an emotional time, where our children and young adults feel especially vulnerable because there is so much emphasis on family. Many may grieve because they are unable to spend the holidays with their families.

At SOS we work to prepare our children for the often difficult holiday period by providing mental health counseling and ensuring that there is an abundance of fun activities, love, and filled wish lists. Meet Krista Vecchione, our on-site therapist who is at the center of working with our children and their feelings about the holidays.

SOS: What made you interested in this line of work?

KV: From an early age, I was interested in the different ways people think, feel, and behave. I also have a natural way of making the people around me feel comfortable. I decided early on that I would use my interests and my skills to begin a career in the field of Mental Health.

SOS: What is your favorite part of what you do?

KV: My favorite part of work is when clients have their "Ah-Ha" moments and use them to make the necessary connections to improve their mental health. Another favorite part of my work is when I receive calls, letters, or emails from clients that I have served over the years telling me how well they are doing. I especially love it when they report specific skills or interventions that they have learned to use in their daily lives.

SOS: Would you share any challenges our children have with the holidays? What are these, and how do you help them work through this?

KV: The holidays are especially hard for our children. Some are separated from their families, others only have us as family and many struggle with adverse memories of holidays from their past. This creates many difficult thoughts and emotions for our children. In the therapy office, we learn ways to identify, confront, separate, and reframe these thoughts so that they can create more positive moods and emotions. They learn to

find gratitude despite their difficult situations. This helps to create an overall better sense and concept of the holidays.

SOS: Holidays can be difficult for many people; do you see additional issues for our children?

KV: Additional issues for our children include a lost sense of normalcy during the holidays. Some of them also struggle with an overall sense of grief, loneliness, and self-blame.

SOS: Are you working with families on any special coping mechanisms or visits for the holidays?

KV: As a team that also includes the families, we use psychoeducation, relaxation, and cognitive coping skills as some ways to cope with the difficult emotions, behaviors and other complex situations that occur during the holidays.

SOS: Share one of your happiest moments with a child (ren) you have worked with.

KV: There have been SO MANY happy moments with these incredible children. At this moment, one of the happiest times that comes to mind is the gratitude the children expressed at our recent SOS Village Thanksgiving dinner. So many of our children, who have never spoken out in public before, stood up and gave great thanks to all the staff at SOS Children's Village. It's wonderful knowing that we DO make a difference.

In this season of giving, help make a child's holiday magical by making a donation at www.sosflorida.com