



GUIDANCE FOR PROSPECTIVE HOSTS

Boundaries and Expectations

- Set some house rules within the first few days. It saves difficulties later; and you can always relax them when things start to settle down and you know your guests better. House rules can help guests feel more secure - they don't have to tiptoe round trying to work out what their hosts expect of them. House rules are set up with a kind and helpful intent for all.

With house rules and boundaries in mind:

- Sharing space - How have you talked about or thought about this with each other in your family? The devil is often in the detail!
 - How important is privacy and allocation of space in your family?
 - What are your habits or implicit rules around kitchen use, eating times etc?
 - What are your key concerns about such things as noise, security, use of bathroom - hot water?
- Try to offer the flexibility to provide space and autonomy for guests.
- Phases – The relationship you have with your guests will likely go through different phases – Uncomfortable beginnings, Honeymoon period, Tricky time when people feel able to speak more openly – at this latter point the relationships can become a bit more 'real' and there are more opportunities to discuss and negotiate.
- Consult your guests about issues as they arise. It respects their autonomy and it will reduce the likelihood of unexpected challenges if you can collaborate with them regularly.
- Try to avoid becoming defensive if you are challenged – see it as part of a process of relationships settling down in the context of guests who may feel they have lost all authority and dignity over their lives.

It is important to identify issues that are arising before they blow up. We will think in our workshops about how to manage these and get support.

With this in mind:

- What are your family apprehensions of what to expect – e.g. guest family trauma and how to manage, where to get help.
- How have you thought about ways of managing your own and your family's distress if difficult emotional stuff comes up?
- Conversely how can you help to create a context of resilience such that guests are slowly able to recover their competence, resources, skills and abilities?



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Children

- Don't feel shy about consulting your guests about how their childcare works and what help they want from you. Every culture has different rules and practices.
- Don't allow children who speak English to be the interpreters continually. It undermines parents. It gives children extra unnecessary responsibility.
- It is important to support your guests' parental authority. This may have been eroded by the vulnerability of the experience thus far
- How are things talked about with children – yours and the guest family's
And what can appropriately be talked about with children in terms of their age/development
- Children's wellbeing is supported by routines and structure – helping to get those in place will be valuable.
- It may well be helpful to let children know what will be happening and what the adults will be doing at home whilst they are at school, so they can go to school feeling reassured that life is settling down.
- Never take photos of your guest and especially their children without their permission and do not upload them on to social media without their express agreement.
- How have you thought about managing difficult and maybe ungenerous behaviour from your children towards guest's children and vice versa?
- If children have been without food for long periods on their journey, you may find they hide food or hoard it. You don't need to make a big thing of this. One way of managing it is always to leave food around that children can take – nuts, carrots sticks, grapes, crisps, crackers. You will find the hiding of food will gradually decrease.

Communication, negotiation

- How do you discuss the best ways to talk and understand each other?
- How are difficult conversations handled in your family?
- How do you usually deal with differences, blow ups and misunderstandings?



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- Sometimes trying to communicate with each other in different languages can be too tiring for you both. For that reason, don't be offended if guests want to be on their own.
- Don't be shy or embarrassed to ask and why you are asking – e.g. what would be helpful for guest family in terms of helping them feel supported when they are distressed. Accept that this may just mean leaving them alone for a while. See below

Being helpful – what does it mean to different people in the context of cultural differences and of trauma

- What does it mean to be helpful in your family - and as a host?
 - What is your family style – problem solving by being practical? Offering solutions? Listening?
 - There are different ways to 'Be With' people in distress. Sitting quietly with them. Listening. Asking them what helps get them through. Leaving them to be alone if they want.
 - Not everyone wants a hug or to be touched.
- "we can't unpack the luggage while people are still on their journey" Allow guests time to settle
- TV news all the time could cause trauma and distress to be re-lived. Think about how to manage that.
- People have different coping styles & resources. Watch, listen and learn how your guests have managed to cope and what helps them.
- Don't be offended if guests simply want to stay in their own rooms in the evening. Continually socialising with others can be hard work (for both guests and hosts) so try to make their rooms somewhere they can be comfortable spending a lot of time on their own. Having a guest TV is often a good idea.
- Be careful not to make assumptions. E.g. Just because people seem calm, doesn't mean they are.

Just because they look serious or cross doesn't mean they are.



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Learning about and appreciating differences

- Identify your family styles/skills/resources.
- Become aware of your guest family's style/skills/resources and engage with these. Allow them to do things for you – cook for you if they want etc.
- Try to engage with the richer picture of your guests lives beyond their story of war and displacement
- Do show curiosity about their country – food, birthdays etc. Many will be proud of their country and will want an excuse to remember the good times. Try learning a few words of welcome in their own language.
- What do you need to know about guests' cultural routines, rituals, foods etc that would help create a supportive context, but also be aware that cultural differences are about more than things like food? They can be about rules of behaviour - manners or about how people express emotion.
- Triggers that may suggest a mismatch or potential difficulty. We all get annoyed and irritated...what are your triggers?
- Noise and quiet – how do families cope with noise levels differently? What are your limits? You only have to ask neighbours in built up areas to know how noise issues can ruin relationships!

Some information on trauma

- Trauma is not the event but it is a reaction to the event - what happens inside you.
- Trauma is trivialised in our day-to-day use of it. Being upset is not the same as being traumatised
- Being distressed, bereaved, displaced is not the same as being traumatised.
- people respond Different differently to traumatising events
- Trauma can leave people feeling ashamed and guilty, especially if they are survivors and others have not survived
- Not everyone suffers from trauma. Different people have different coping styles and will struggle or cope in different ways
- Trauma can be 'contagious'. We call it 'Vicarious trauma' Be aware of how you and your family manage your emotional lives and have support.



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Experience of trauma can mean

- Feeling out of control
- Needing to be continually vigilant
- An emotional reaction can appear to emerge out of the blue without an obvious lead up

Trauma may have included events when people felt

- frightened
- under threat
- humiliated
- abandoned
- unsafe
- unsupported
- trapped
- ashamed
- powerless.

Experiences that echo such feelings can revive the trauma

How trauma can manifest

- Difficulty concentrating. Confusion
- Anger, irritability, mood swings.
- Anxiety and fear.
- Guilt, shame, self-blame.
- Withdrawal
- Feeling sad or hopeless.
- Feeling disconnected or numb.
- Disbelief, Denial

Recovery from trauma requires

- time
- A sense of safe connections to others
- Time alone,
- Routine, structure
- Activity



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- Being listened to,
- Regaining confidence,
- Regaining a sense of belief in one's judgement

SOME PRACTICAL THOUGHTS

Particularly when you are new to hosting, it can be helpful to have a few guidelines on practical issues.

Security

- If guests are to have their own key, run through how the locks work. Cover all external doors. What about windows? - do you close/lock them when you go out? Which ones?
- Explain the alarm system if you have one.

Coming into the house

- Where should guests leave their coat? Umbrella?
- Is yours a 'shoes off' house? What about when dirty/wet?

Heating

- Explain how it works (if it's all set centrally, you may want to make it clear that the guests shouldn't change anything)
- Are there thermostats on individual radiators? Which ones are you happy for the guests to change?

Common spaces

- Make it clear which rooms the guests can share. And when.
- If relevant, show how the TV / music works

Kitchen

- Are you going to provide basics such as bread, milk and laundry powder?
- Make it clear exactly what the guests is welcome to use. Be specific – 'help yourself to anything' is generous, but guests may find it hard to act on.



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- If you're going to invite your guests to eat with you, when/how often? What time do you eat?
- Find out if there is anything they can't/prefer not to eat.
- If they are going to provide some or all of their own food, is there a shelf they should use? Is there space in the fridge?
- Run through the kitchen with them - how does the cooker/microwave/dishwasher work?
- What's the system for the bins? the recycling?
- Any rules on cleaning / what goes in the dishwasher etc?
- Fire blanket/fire extinguisher?
- How to use the washing machine and how you dry laundry.

Bathroom

- If you have more than one bathroom, which should they use?
- Any restrictions on time (eg in the morning when you're rushing to work)?
- Where can they keep their bathroom stuff?
- What about cleaning?

Garden

- Can they use the garden? whenever they want?

A few other things

- Do they need anything to practise their religion?
- If they have a bike, or if there's one they can use - where to keep/lock it up.
- Do you want to give them eg the neighbours' names / phone numbers in case of emergency?