

HOLIDAY TIPS

- *The holiday season is chaotic for any family, but for families living with and caring for children on the autism spectrum, it's a new level of super-charged chaos. Here are a few tips we've gathered over the years, both from experience and from other parents.*

Limit lights.

Your child has sensory issues. Blinking lights are a bad idea. Period. Dimly lit rooms with holiday lights are usually very soothing. decorations in general may need to be done slowly and with warnings for your child so they know what to expect.

Thinking outside the gift-box

Many kids have a hard time opening presents because they don't like the sound of tearing paper. Others have made paper-tearing a hobby. Use gift bags or cloth material to wrap gifts for those who are sensitive.

People Panic

Having people over for a holiday gathering? Be sure to let your child know what to expect such as who will be coming, and how long they will be staying. Also, give your child permission to chill in their room or another designated area where they can decompress if necessary. And keep that area off-limits to everyone else.

AUTISM BLUEPRINT HOLIDAYS TIPS, PG 2

Transition Troubles

Be realistic about how much transitioning your child can do effectively during the course of a day. Going new places and meeting new people can be extremely taxing on kids with ASD. Identify a place (even the bathroom works) where your child can go to decompress if needed. Bring a pair of headphones for your child so they can block out the noisy hustle and bustle of the season.

Great Expectations

Use picture schedules or social stories to help your child know what to expect. Respect their desire to opt out of the things that are too overwhelming. Also remind them of what kind of behavior is appropriate where you're going. Telling your child to "Be a good boy" is vague and doesn't mean anything to them. Telling them to say "Thank You" when they receive a gift, makes it easier to comply.

Quit While You're Ahead

Don't wait until your child is sensory overloaded to leave the party.

Decide how long you think they can last and then decrease it by an hour. Better to leave while your child is in a good place and call it a successful outing than push your luck.

Re-think Tradition

Create new traditions when the old ones don't work out. Those glass ornaments that were handed down from your great-grandmother may not be the best idea if your child likes to rearrange tree ornaments daily. Rather than constantly scold them for it, why not make the tree their own by replacing with plastic and paper decorations.