

A Parent's Guide to Holiday Behavior Support

Sydney Blankenship, BCBA



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OLSD Behavior Team

Behavior Specialists

Sydney Blankenship: LHS, LMS, HMS, WRES, TRES,
SRES, ISES, LTES, SMES, Preschools: ISES, WRES

Julie Sherwood: OHS, BHS, BMS, JCES, CES, AES,
WCES, ACES, SMES, Preschools: ACES, AES, Career Center

Jack Schlabig: OOHS, OOMS, FTES, OCES, OMES, GOES,
SMS, HES, Preschools: OSP, SRES



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Holiday Stress

- 33% of Americans say they wish they could skip the holiday season rather than spend money on gifts, according to a 2017 survey.
- Nearly a quarter of Americans reported feeling “extreme stress” come holiday time, according to a poll by the American Psychological Association. Holiday stress statistics show that up to 69% of people are stressed by the feeling of having a “lack of time,” 69% are stressed by perceiving a “lack of money,” and 51% are stressed out about the “pressure to give or get gifts.”



Why are the Holidays SO Stressful for parents!?

- Kids off school
- Worrying about time off work/Lack of time
- Gift giving pressure
- A messy house
- Travel stress
- Sadness
- Weight Gain
- Money worries
- Seeing "favorite" family members
- Missing loved ones



Why are the Holidays SO Stressful for kids?!

- Disruption in routine
- Visitors staying for extended time in home
- Missing friends
- New daily expectations and activities
- Different Family traditions than their friends
- Different foods
- Pressure from parents/Pressure to have fun
- Travel
- Less structure
- Seeing "favorite" family members



So, how do we go from this....



To this?



How can parents make the Holiday Season less stressful?

- Structure
- Schedules
- Being aware of screen time
- Prep other family members
- Preview exciting and over-stimulating days
- Practice different holiday traditions before
- Go over expectations of different holiday routines
- Talk about/practice strategies to use when they become overwhelmed



Preparing for Winter Break



Structure, Schedules, and Consistency

- Create a daily schedule for kids (and for yourself). Reach out to your child's teacher to get a sense of what the day is currently looking like at school.
- Try and keep things reasonably consistent. Prioritize eating and sleeping. Regardless of age, we function better when we eat and sleep right.
- Encourage students to utilize speech devices or other alternative communication at home.



Structure, Schedules, and Consistency

Visuals

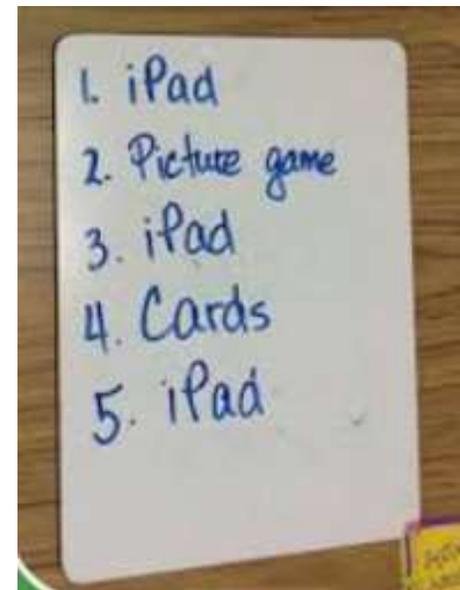
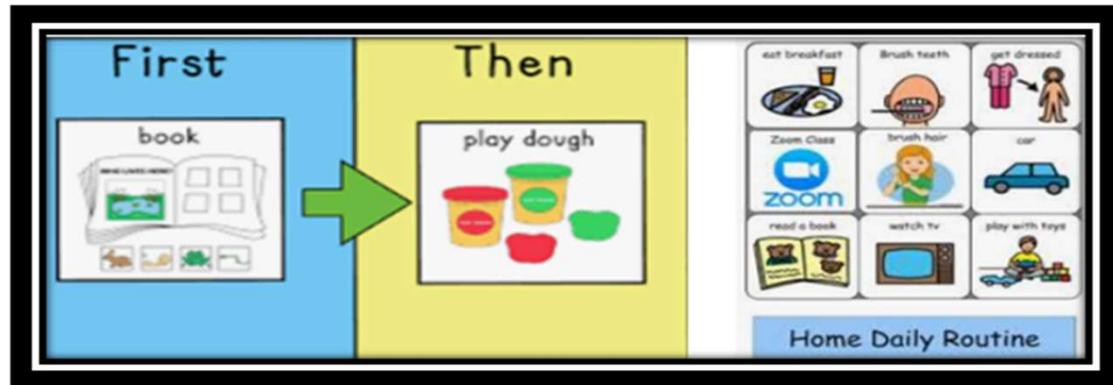
- Labels
- Color Coding
- Visual Reminders
- Placeholders



Visual Schedules Can Look Like....

© Jessica McHale Photography

| | | |
|---------------|---------------------|---|
| Before 9:00am | Wake up | Eat breakfast, make your bed, get dressed, put PJ's in laundry |
| 9:00-10:00 | Morning walk | Family walk with the dog Yoga if it's raining |
| 10:00-11:00 | Academic time | NO ELECTRONICS Sudoku books, flash cards, study guide, Journal |
| 11:00-12:00 | Creative time | Legos, magnetiles, drawing, crafting, play music, cook or bake, etc |
| 12:00 | Lunch | |
| 12:30PM | Chore time | A - wipe all kitchen table and chairs. B - wipe all door handles, light switches, and desk tops C - Wipe both bathrooms - sinks and toilets |
| 1:00-2:30 | Quiet time | Reading, puzzles, nap |
| 2:30-4:00 | Academic time | ELECTRONICS OK Ipad games, Prodigy, Educational show |
| 4:00-5:00 | Afternoon fresh air | Bikes, Walk the dog, play outside |
| 5:00-6:00 | Dinner | |
| 6:00-8:00 | Free TV time | Kid showers x3 |
| 8:00 | Bedtime | All kids |
| 9:00PM | Bedtime | All kids who follow the daily schedule & don't fight |



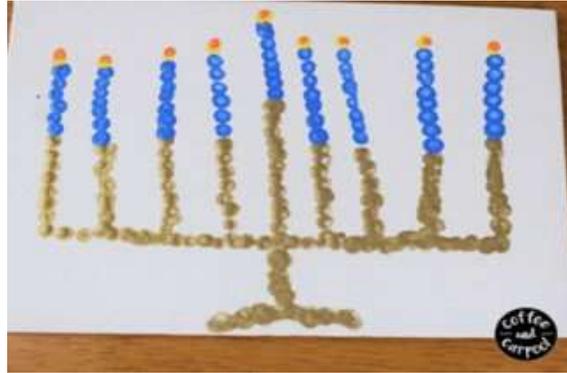
Activities for Home

- Find a balance of activities kids can do independently as well as family activities. Incorporate fine motor, gross motor, etc.
- Be aware of screen time. The CDC recommends kids get at least 60 minutes of physical activity/day. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, kids ages 8-18 spend, on average, 7.5 hours in front of a screen for entertainment each day, 4.5 of which are spent watching TV. Over a year, that adds up to 114 full days watching a screen for fun.





Christmas Cutting Tray



Winter SCAVENGER HUNT



Winter Break Bucket List

Showing Kindness/Helping Others

- Bake homemade cookies and deliver them to first responders
- Donate a new toy to Toys for Tots or a local charity [Find local Toys for Tots locations](#)
- Let one of your teachers know you appreciate them
- Pay for the person behind you in a drive thru
- Leave water bottles & holiday treats by the front door for delivery drivers

Breaking Up with 2020!

- Create a 2020 time capsule and bury it in your back yard [Ideas for your time capsule](#)
- Write your bad 2020 memories on a paper lantern and launch it!
- Create a breakup playlist and dance it out! [Ideas: "Bye, Bye, Bye", "IDGAF", "Survivor"](#)
- Plan a Good Riddance Day [Learn more](#)
- Buy or DIY a "2020" or Coronavirus pinata and smash it to bits [Pinata ideas & DIY directions](#)

Winter/Holiday Activities

- Have a Hallmark holiday movie marathon [Ideas to get cozy for your movies](#)
- Wear an ugly holiday sweater
- Go on a holiday decorations scavenger hunt [Printable scavenger hunt](#)
- Research and tour the best holiday lights in your community
- Find a holiday "Then" picture and recreate it Now

Going Out

- Put googly eyes on objects around your town [Learn more](#)
- Find large, local outdoor murals for a photo shoot with friends
- Go geocaching
- Participate in a Polar Plunge to celebrate the new year
- Go to a drive-in movie

Staying In

- Build a pillow fort and watch a favorite holiday movie
- Make tie dye t-shirts [Get the supplies if you don't have them](#)
- Have a fondue night [Find a fondue set](#)
- Have a tasting night - ice cream, cookies, cakes, smoothies
- Set up a fire pit and make s'mores [Hershey's even has a s'mores kit!](#)



Activities in the Community

- **Sensory Friendly Series at New Albany Symphony:** [Saturday at the Symphony Sensory Friendly concerts](#) are designed for those on the autism spectrum, our friends in the dementia/Alzheimer's community, or for those audience members needing a more relaxed concert experience. Performances are never longer than an hour and include pre-concert lobby activities. **Saturday, December 18, 2021:** Santa & the Symphony
- **AMC Sensory friendly Films:** [AMC Sensory-Friendly Films](#) are geared towards enjoying an outing to the theatre in a safe and accepting environment. The theatres will have the lights up, sound turned lower, and audience members are invited to get up and dance, walk, shout or sing! The series will feature four showings per month, on select Wednesdays and Saturdays

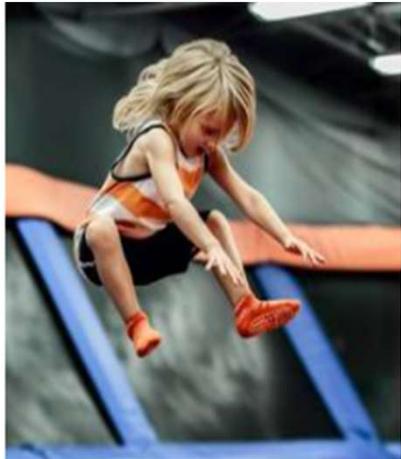


Activities in the Community

- **We Rock the Spectrum:** Oak Creek Center, 1250 E Powell Rd, Lewis Center, OH 43035 614-396-8773 This amazing place offers an environment full of sensory equipment that is specifically designed to aid children with sensory processing disorders while they play and form friendships with their peers of all abilities.
- **Polaris Fashion Place's Sensitive Santa:** Sundays, December 5 and December 12 from 9-10:30am will provide children with special needs and their families with a sensory friendly environment to safely experience the time-honored tradition of visiting Santa Claus. Simple adjustments are made to reduce sensory stimuli (muted lights, music and waiting to visit Santa at activity tables) to create a calming environment. The event is free, and Santa photo packages will be available for purchase. [Reservations encouraged](#) but not required.



Activities in the Community



- **Skyzone sensory hours:** <https://www.skyzone.com/columbus> (last Monday of each month)- Large, noisy, and crowded activity centers can be a nightmare for kids with sensory processing issues, which is exactly why Sky Zone reserves one night per month where the environment is adapted for the enjoyment of all. Music is turned down, distractions are removed, and every effort will be made to accommodate any special need.
- **The Bounce Club:** (<http://thebounceclub.com/pre-k/>) This is Open Jump for those with Special Needs. Our facility is not open to the public during this time. Your jumper will have the opportunity to explore rebounding on the trampolines, running around, having fun playing throughout the entire facility. Parents/Aides do not pay during this hour as they are allowed to assist their jumper at no additional cost. Sensory Friendly Jump is on Sundays at 10:00 am – 11:00 am and is \$12

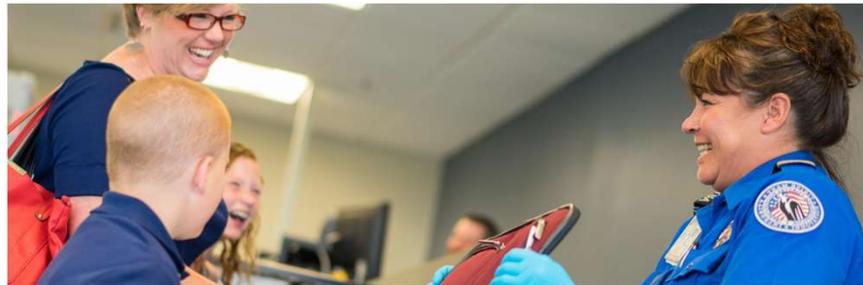


Preparing for Travel and Visits



Preparing for Travel and Visits

- Stay connected and up to date with policy provided by the airline: <https://www.tsa.gov/travel/special-procedures>
- Research before you go: <https://upgradedpoints.com/travel/airports/tsa-airport-security/>
- Travelers requiring special accommodations or concerned about the security screening process at the airport may ask a TSA officer or supervisor for a passenger support specialist who can provide on-the-spot assistance.





Preparing for Travel

- Prep Emergency Forms: <https://www.parentingspecialneeds.org/article/traveling-tips-for-parents-of-children-special-needs/>
- Think about your preferences when purchasing tickets. Where are the bathrooms, near the front to be able to exit first, etc.

Autism Risk & Safety Management **Autism Emergency Contact Form** **Place Photo Here**

Name of Child/Adult with Autism _____ Nickname (if any) _____

Date of Birth _____ Height _____ Weight _____ Eye Color _____ Hair Color _____

Medical Conditions _____ Scars or Identifying Marks _____

Address _____ City, State, Zip _____ Home Phone _____ Other Phone _____

Method of Communication, if non-verbal: sign language, picture boards, written word, etc. _____

Identification Worn (ex. Jewelry/Medic Alert?, clothing tags, ID card, tracking monitor, etc.) _____

Current Prescriptions (include dosage): _____

Sensory/Medical/Dietary issues and requirements, if any: _____

Inclination for wandering behavior or characteristics that may attract attention: _____

Favorite attractions or locations where person may be found, if missing: _____

Likes/Dislikes (include approach and de-escalation techniques): _____

Please attach any additional information. Use extra paper if necessary.

For additional information & tips, please go to www.AutismRiskManagement.com

Medical Care Providers

Name/Phone: _____

Name/Phone: _____

Name/Phone: _____

Parent/Caregiver Info

Name: _____

Address: _____

Home/Other Phone: _____

Other Contact Info: _____

Emergency Contact Info

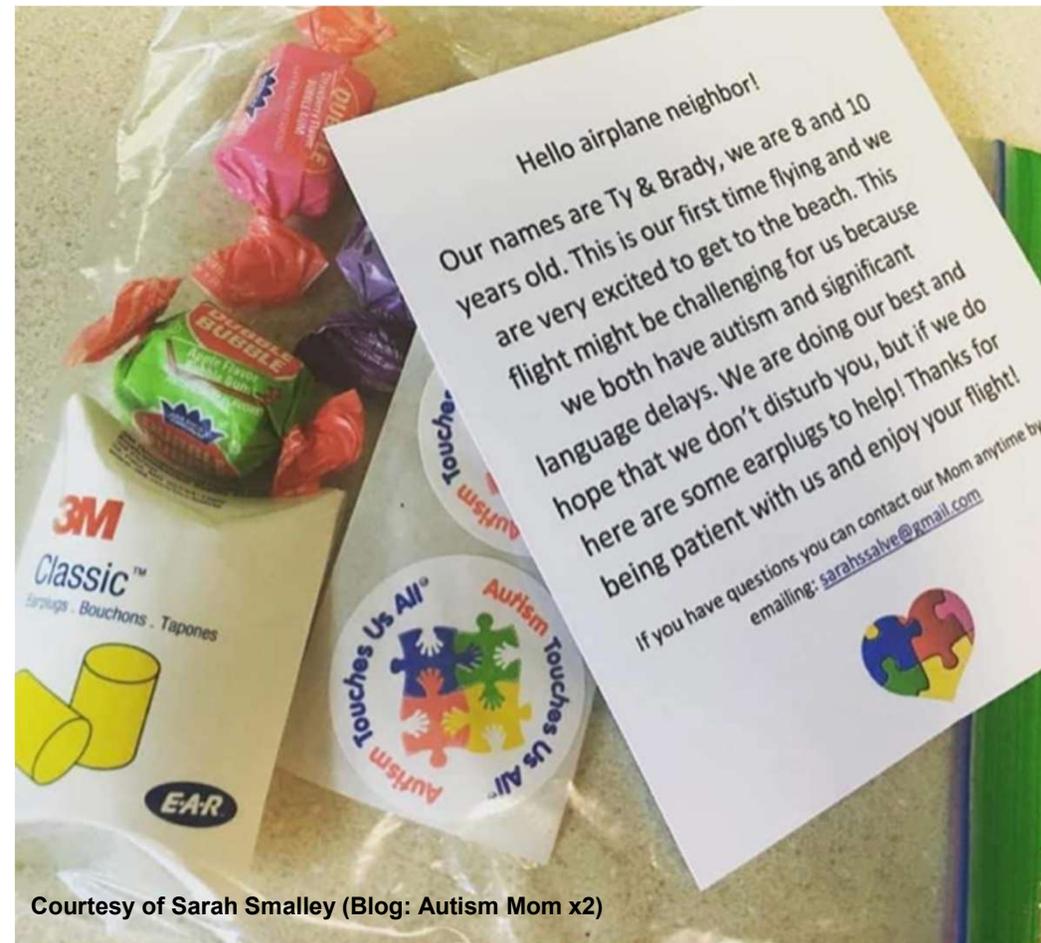
Name: _____

Address: _____

Home/Other Phone: _____

Additional Travel Prep

- Communicating with others
- Using tools to share the passage of time to show kids how much time is left in the trip
- Prep needed items for the car or carrying on. Comfort items from home may help your child acclimate to a different environment: a pillow, blanket, noise machine or favorite stuffed animal. Consider preferred activities, fidgets, headphones, etc. Having a new preferred toy ready for longer trips can be helpful.



Courtesy of Sarah Smalley (Blog: Autism Mom x2)

Visits with Friends and Family

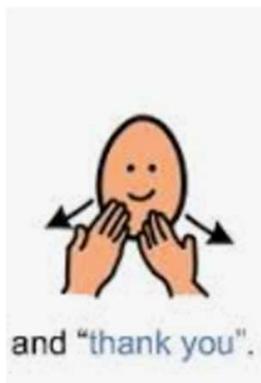
- Communicate in an honest way with family, especially extended family. They may not always be aware of the rules and routines your household follows. A good approach is to be forthcoming and explain why something is or is not allowed for your child.
- Prep a “safe space” for kids to take a break in places you are visiting. Once you have arrived at the location you are visiting, show your child where they can go if they need a break.
- Considering having a code word for your child to use when they are starting to feel overwhelmed and need your help to take a break.



Gifting



Gift-giving



- Practice the routine of handing gifts to other and opening a gift, saying "thank you", etc. If your child is non-vocal or shy, try having them point to a "thank you" icon or make fun thank you cards.



- If you notice that your child is anxious or overwhelmed throughout this process, maybe ask friends and family to simply place the gift in a gift bag or leave the gift unboxed.



- Practice appropriate responses for gifts (expected gifts, unexpected gifts, etc.)



Gifts

- Write a social story to help preview events and expectations. Use simple language or visuals in a way that your child will understand. If you are stating multiple events, state them in the order in which they will occur. Describe how your child should respond to what will occur.
- Make sure gifts are prepped for your child before being wrapped (i.e., put together, add batteries, etc.)
- Consider using picture name tags or organize gifts in section by person or assign each person a different color.

Other kids get presents too. Their presents may be under the Christmas tree with mine.



I will know a present is for me when I see a tag on the present that has my name on it.



<https://adayinourshoes.com/social-stories-christmas/>



Taking Care of Yourself!



Asking for Help and Seeking Support

- Parent groups
- Help from educational team
- Home support services
- Seek help from professionals in the field
- Communicate with your DCBDD or FCBDD case manager or intake department



Additional Resources

- <https://fcbdd.org/>



- <https://www.dcbdd.org/>



- <https://www.ocecd.org/FamilyResources.aspx>



- <https://www.nationwidechildrens.org/specialties/behavioral-health>



Remember!

- The holiday season and/or Winter Break is a time to relax and enjoy the moment
- Focus on making memories and spending time together
- Don't put too much pressure on yourself or your kids



Additional Topics for Discussion, Questions, Comments?





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THANK YOU

Resources and References

- <https://www.trianglениsenioryear.com/websiteblog/winter-break-bucket-list-ideas-including-5-ways-to-say-goodbye-to-2020>
- <https://www.columbusonthecheap.com/events-for-families-and-kids/>
- <https://www.columbusonthecheap.com/disability-friendly-and-sensory-friendly-in-columbus/>
- <https://www.amctheatres.com/programs/sensory-friendly-films>
- <https://artpossibleohio.org/>
- <https://www.parentingspecialneeds.org/article/traveling-tips-for-parents-of-children-special-needs/>
- <https://pulse.seattlechildrens.org/7-tips-to-manage-your-childs-routine-during-the-holiday-season/>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/multimedia/infographics/getmoving.html>

