



Newmark Education

Newmark Parent Update - Counseling & OT Tips

November 30, 2022



Counseling & Occupational Therapy Winter Tips

Dear Newmark Parents,

The holiday season is upon us already! November and December offer many occasions for celebration, connections, traditions, time off from school and work, perhaps travel, and certainly fun. Here are some tips from our Counseling and Occupational Therapy departments to help your child.

Counseling: Focus on Social and Communication Skills

The holidays present opportunities for our students to continue their social and emotional development either through practicing social and communication skills at gatherings or using coping strategies to manage the stress that sometimes comes along with the holidays.

The celebrations that occur during the holidays, while enjoyable for many, can be stressful or difficult for those who struggle with social skills. Some things that families can do to prepare their children for these events are:

- **Practice social greetings ahead of time:** Hellos and goodbyes with eye contact and specific words such as, "Hi Aunt Sally, Happy Holidays!" and "Goodbye Grandma, thank you for having me."
- **Rehearse opening gifts:** Giving children the words for when they don't like a gift they received or are surprised by a gift. Gratitude in any scenario is the key skill to use.
- **Explain the plans and expectations before the event:** Let your child know where the event is, who will be there, why you have chosen to attend, what the attendees will be doing (i.e. chatting, eating, playing games, watching football...), what kinds of food may be served and the times you will arrive and depart.
- **Identify conversation ideas:** Help your child think of some topics they can talk about with the adults

and other children.

- Above all, **patience and praise** go a long way in reinforcing your child's attempts to engage in a socially expected manner during the holidays.

Since the holidays can sometimes be stressful for everyone, here is an article from [The Mayo Clinic](#) with tips for emotionally coping.

Occupational Therapy: Functional Living Skill - Setting the Table

The holiday season is a great time to work on functional living skills. Whether you are hosting a large gathering or having a smaller family meal together, setting the table can be a great way for your child to participate. Although it may seem simple, setting the table requires multiple skills. For example, executive functioning skills such as sorting, planning and working memory are needed to gather the appropriate materials. Gross motor, body and spatial awareness skills are needed to load and carry items from one place to another. Grading force to gently place items on the table is another important part of setting the table. Visual motor skills help to know where each item should be placed in relationship to one another. Understanding that it takes such a multitude of skills to complete this routine task is helpful. It is something that needs to be directly instructed and modeled so your child can be successful. If we can be of any help, please do not hesitate to email the OT department with any questions.

[View](#) video to help your child learn **Basic Table Setting Skills**. For more helpful Functional Living Skills videos, visit Newmark's [Functional Living Skills Video Library](#).

If you have any questions, please contact us at 908-753-0330 or by email. Wishing peace and joy to you and your family this holiday season!

Sincerely,

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