

Holiday Tips For A Merry Time With Children Who Have Special Needs

December 5, 2023 | No Comments

The holidays are the most exciting time of the year but they also can be very overwhelming and stressful, especially for children who have special needs and parents.

This holiday season, take a moment to de-stress by preparing and planning ahead to help with your loved one's sensory needs. If you have a child with sensory sensitivities, there are many ways you can help create a more relaxed environment and enjoyable holiday experience.

Holiday Schedules:

- Build holiday activities into your schedule and share your holiday celebration visual schedule with your child.
- Factor in sensory breaks for your child and have desired comfort items prepared.
- Maintain a routine and stick to your schedule as much as possible.
- Take breaks when needed.

Gift Giving Tips:

- Wrap gifts so they are easy to open.
- Practice opening and giving gifts.
- Give presents one by one instead of all at once.

Holiday Activities:

- Visit a sensory-friendly Santa.
- Reach out to the Parent Network team for a virtual video holiday greeting from Santa (email: info@parentnetworkwny.org)
- Go to a drive-by light display.
- Decorate holiday cookies or a gingerbread house.

Sensory Friendly Tips:

- Add cinnamon to your child's play-dough to gradually introduce new scents.
- Limit decorations for children with special needs who easily get over-stimulated.
- Consider bringing ear plugs, sunglasses, or comfortable clothing to change into.

Holiday Parties:

- Prompt your family and child with appropriate conversation starters.
- If traveling, pack favorite books, toys, food, etc.
- If possible, avoid crowds.
- Establish a safe space/safe zone at your destination.
- Create a code word for your child to use when they become overwhelmed. Respond immediately and have a quiet place to calm down.

While there is a lot of excitement in the air and sometimes a bit of stress, remember to keep in mind the most important aspect of all these holiday celebrations – spending time together with your family and loved ones.