



**Making the  
Holidays Work  
for Everyone**

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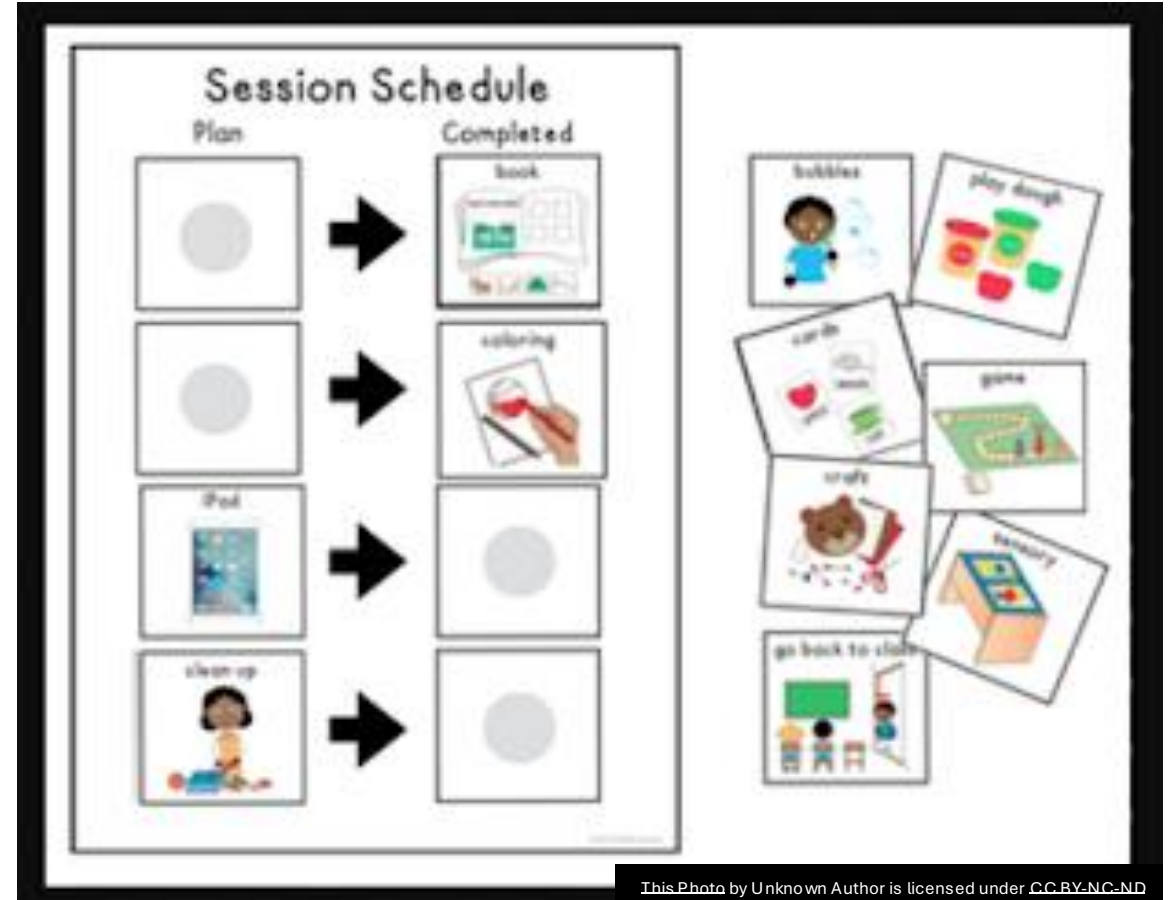
**A Family Guide to Peaceful and  
Joyful Holiday Celebrations**

Roanoke County Public Schools  
Parent Resource Center

# Understanding Holiday Stressors

## For Children with Disabilities:

- Changes in routine and schedule
- Unfamiliar faces and environments
- Sensory overload (lights, music, crowds, smells)
- Different foods and mealtimes
- Higher expectations for social interaction





# Understanding Holiday Stressors

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## For Parents and Caregivers:

- Financial pressures
- Extended family expectations
- Additional planning needs
- Balancing everyone's needs
- Time management challenges



# Strategies for Success

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## 1. Prepare and Preview

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- Create a visual calendar showing holiday events
- Show pictures of relatives who will visit
- Practice opening presents
- Visit holiday locations when quiet





# Strategies for Success

## 2. Maintain Routines

- Keep core daily schedules consistent
- Stick to regular bedtimes
- Continue usual meals when possible
- Schedule medication times as normal

8:30 - 9:00 Arrival and Centers		11:30 - 12:00 Lunch	
9:00 - 9:30 Outside (or gym)		12:30 - 1:30 Rest Time	
9:30 - 10:00 Small Groups (includes snack)		1:30 - 2:00 Quiet Activities	
10:00 - 11:00 Centers		2:00 - 2:15 Afternoon Snack Time	
11:00 - 11:30 Clean Up, Storytime Large Group		2:15 - 2:30 Pick Up/Dismissal	

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# Strategies for Success

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## 3. Create Sensory Safe Spaces

### Pack a comfort kit:

- Noise-canceling headphones
- Favorite fidget toys
- Comfort objects
- Sunglasses for bright lights
- Familiar snacks

# Signs to Watch For



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## Your Child May Need a Break When:

- Becoming more vocal or quiet than usual
- Showing increased stimming behaviors
- Having difficulty focusing
- Becoming clingy or withdrawn





# Creating New Traditions

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## Ideas for Inclusive Celebrations:

- Open presents over several days
- Have quiet holiday light viewing
- Create sensory-friendly crafts
- Cook favorite foods together



# Resources for Support

- Local parent support groups
- Online communities
- Respite care services
- School staff/IEP team



# Final Tips

- Start small and build up
- Document what works
- Share successes with others
- Celebrate your family's way
- Build memories at your own pace
- Trust your instincts







**Remember:**

*"Your family's well-being matters more than meeting others' expectations.  
Create the holiday season that works best for you."*