

# Tips for Celebrating the Holidays with Your Child



## **T**herapy **C**enter for **C**hildren LLC

### Tips for Celebrating the Holidays with Your Child

The holidays are all about being with family and enjoying the festivities, but the holidays can also be a very stressful and busy time of year as well. This can be very difficult for any child, especially for a child with special needs. Parents may find the following tips helpful for yourself and your child. Here are some tips for celebrating the holidays with your child:

**1.** Plan visits with family and friends for short periods of time. If you plan short visits, your child is less likely to get overtired or overwhelmed. If possible, try to keep the visitors to a few at a time as well.

**2.** This should be a fun time of year for everyone and some children don't feel comfortable doing certain activities that they are not used to. If you can plan fun activities that you know your child will enjoy ahead of time, that may help as well. Do not force your child to participate in activities they do not like. If you are having a family dinner, be mindful of where your child may be comfortable sitting.

**3.** Try to keep your child's schedule. If bedtime is at 8:00 in the evening, stick to it as close as possible. Explain to visitors that your child's needs come first, and they need their sleep. Taking a sleepy child somewhere is asking for trouble. If there is something that requires them to stay up later in the evening, try to get them a nap in the afternoon. This will help the child enjoy the activity later in the day.

**4.** Spread holiday activities out over a few days. This way, your child does not become too overwhelmed and it also makes the fun last longer!

**5.** Crowds and waiting in long lines may be difficult for any child. If you want and need to shop with your child, it may be helpful to shop more frequently for shorter durations of time. You may also consider making purchases online and having them delivered.

**6.** Consider opening a few presents at a time. Opening Christmas presents is very exciting to a child and the excitement can become overwhelming and over stimulating. By opening a few presents at a time, the child may not become too overwhelmed and can enjoy each of their gifts.

**7.** Make sure you are prepared for your children to play with a gift or two right away. Be sure to have batteries, tools and anything else you'll need to open up boxes and put together toys as soon as the child opens them. This could be very frustrating and cause a possible outburst if a child is excited for a toy but cannot play with it.

**8.** This is the time of year where cookies, candy and other sweets are everywhere. Try to limit these kinds of food for your child. A fun activity might be to bake cookies or other goodies with healthier ingredients. Too many goodies, as we all know, can lead to stomach aches and other health issues.



## Tips for Celebrating the Holidays with Your Child (continued)

**9.** Parents: Practice in simple relaxation exercises, such as yoga, and try keeping to your own routines. If your child senses stress from you, they may become uneasy.

**10.** Use rehearsal and role play to give children practice ahead of time in dealing with new social situations, or work together to write a “social story” that incorporates all the elements of an upcoming event or visit to better prepare them for that situation. They could also practice unwrapping gifts ahead of time to help them learn and understand the meaning of gifts. These activities will not only be fun, but will help your child overcome anxiety.

**11.** If you need to travel over the holidays, whether it’s by car or plane, be prepared! Make sure you have everything you need and that your child understands the plan. Traveling anytime can be a challenge with children, especially this time of year. Try to have fun travel games prepared and use the above mentioned to practice social situations with your child.

**12.** Get a list of gift ideas for relatives from your child’s teacher and therapists.



**13.** Take pictures when you and your child trim the tree, visit relatives, open gifts, etc. Make a book about your holiday by gluing the pictures onto construction paper, writing a short sentence under each picture, and stapling the pages together. When someone asks your child a question regarding the holidays, your child can use the book as a visual cue to help tell about the things he or she did.

**14.** The holidays are a time to spend with family, friends and the ones we love and to be thankful for all we have in our lives. Enjoy the holiday with your child.

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