

## Tips for Celebrating Holidays with Your Autistic Child

The holidays are all about being with family and enjoying the festivities. This can be very difficult for a child with Autism. This does not mean the holidays are ruined, it just means that as a parent you will have to take some precautions. Here are some tips for celebrating the holidays with your Autistic child.

1. Plan visits with family and friends for short time periods. If you plan short visits your child is less likely to get over tired, or overwhelmed. Keep the visitors to a few at a time.
2. Do not force your child to participate in activities they do not like. If you are having a family dinner and your Autistic child does not want to sit at the table with a lot of people let them sit where they are comfortable.
3. Keep your child's schedule. If bed time is at eight in the evening, stick to it. Explain to visitors that your child's needs come first, and they need their sleep. Taking a sleepy child somewhere will be asking for trouble. If there is something that requires them staying up later in the evening try to get 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. There is no rule stating that you have to visit all the family in one day. They would much rather see your child in a happy mood than in the midst of a meltdown.
5. Leave your child home while Christmas shopping. If your Autistic child does not like crowds do not take them Christmas shopping. Leave them home with your spouse, or other responsible care giver. It is hard enough to deal with the crowded stores alone. It could be miserable bringing an unhappy child along.
6. Consider opening a few presents at a time. Opening Christmas presents is very exciting to a child. To a Autistic child the excitement can become overwhelming. An autistic child often has issues with over stimulation. By opening a few presents at a time the child does become to overwhelmed, and can enjoy their gifts.
7. If you have your child on a special diet make sure friends and family know this. You do not want other people feeding your child things that could ruin the progress you have made. Some people might not agree with your choices about your child's diet. Be strong and stick to your beliefs.
8. Remember the reason for the holidays. They are meant to be spent with family

and loved ones. Enjoy the holiday with your Autistic child. Be thankful for all you have in your life.

9. Reward your child for their good behavior while visiting others. This will help with unwanted behaviors. The child will know they can earn a prize so they will work harder on behaving.

10. Relax. If your child senses stress or anxiety from you they will become uneasy.

The holidays with an Autistic child can be a wonderful time with a little extra planning. Forget about the daily problems and struggles you have. Remember all the good things you have. Most of all enjoy the holidays with your Autistic child.