

TIP SHEET Reducing Holiday Stimulation

Holidays can be a stressful time, especially for children with autism and other developmental disorders. Following are some helpful tips to lessen the inevitable increased stimulation associated with the holiday season.

1. Try to maintain as much of a routine as possible.
2. Limit the number of stores to which you expose your child.
3. Have your child help plan and organize the decorating process.
4. Some families find it helpful to only have one color of lights on the tree (the non-blinking variety is less stimulating).
5. Holidays are associated with delicious smells; however, some fragrances are more calming than others. Vanilla, chamomile, and lavender are best for many children.
6. Add decorations to the inside and outside of your house slowly to avoid overloading the senses all at one time.
7. Use social stories to prepare children for upcoming events or changes in routine.
8. Limit the number of gifts that are visible during the weeks leading up to the holidays.
9. Incorporate sensory activities into family functions (i.e., make snow angels, etc.).
10. Discuss realistic expectations for holiday events and family functions prior to their occurrence to avoid stress and disappointment.
11. It is all right to say “No” to anything that you think may cause undue stress to you, your family, or your children.
12. Enjoy the holidays!

These tips were compiled from a variety of sources. For more tip sheets, visit www.fraser.org.