



SEN NEWSLETTER

Autumn Term
2021
Half term 2



Christmas special

End of term

The Autumn term has whizzed by and Christmas is fast approaching. With that in mind, this newsletter includes some advice on how to support your child through the holidays, as well as details about upcoming events in the new year and places to go for help or guidance.

ASD

If your child has **Autism**, they may find the holidays extra difficult to manage.

The following website contains some useful tips to ensure you all have a happy Christmas:

<https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/leisure/christmas>



Helpful approaches for a PDA profile of autism at Christmas

Christmas can be an overwhelming time for autistic people. We've put together some general suggestions of helpful approaches for PDA families & individuals.

www.pdasociety.org.uk

Perspective & Preparation

- ~ Try not to let tradition or pressure from others determine your plans
- ~ Redesign Christmas to work for your household
- ~ Plan collaboratively with flexibility for plans to change as needed
- ~ Incorporate lots of downtime and where possible continue usual routines and activities



ADHD

If your child has **ADHD**, it can create extra challenges during the Christmas break. Here are some tips to make the season easier from understood.org:

Options

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1. Pick and choose holiday events

You don't have to accept everything. If your child gets antsy or goes to the most important event, gathering at Grandma's house. But maybe you (or your child) at your neighbour's house. You with smaller or more active events a snowman with a few friends

2. Give your child a heads-up

Kids with ADHD can get overwhelmed by changes to routines or new schedules through what to expect can't be on timelines ("We'll be there for you and outfits ("You don't need please no gym clothes"). Be careful

Gifts ~ Make & share a wish list of gift ideas & delivery preferences e.g. stocking

- not in bedroom* or gifts placed somewhere rather than physically handed over
- ~ Reduce uncertainty & overload e.g. say what gifts are coming, wrap in one parcel/clear cellophane or don't wrap, open gifts at a comfortable pace
- ~ Consider giving one or more gifts early if waiting causes anxiety
- ~ Reduce expectations around saying thank you for gifts



*inform Santa too

Food

- ~ Put less focus on Christmas dinner
- ~ Offer choice around where, when and what to eat
- ~ Make familiar/preferred foods available



Traditions

- ~ Traditions can feel like demands
- ~ Creating your own family's routines, Christmas-themed or otherwise and with room for flexibility, can be helpful

Recognising & Reducing Anxiety

- ~ Be aware of anxiety cues - it may not always 'look like' anxiety
- ~ Sudden emotional changes can occur more frequently when anxiety is high
- ~ Humour, rest & taking a break from Christmas-themed activities can be helpful
- ~ Keep calm & try not to take anything personally
- ~ Be aware of masking and how this affects anxiety later on
- ~ Build in lots of recovery time and personalised regulating/calming activities



5. Find an escape space.

Wherever you're headed, it helps to have an "escape space" in case your child feels antsy. Once you get there, find a spot where your child has permission to retreat to e.g. a quiet chair in the corner.

6. Keep entertainment handy.

Some kids with ADHD [get bored easily](#). Pack games and activities to keep your child busy. Include quiet items like books and crayons, devices with headphones, or simple card games kids can play with another child. If your child needs to move, bring a ball to kick around

outside. Or plan a group activity for during the party.

7. Give your child a job.

Kids with ADHD often do better at events when they have a job. Ask what your child wants to do to contribute. You could "assign" your child to take pictures of the family or to entertain younger cousins (just make sure your child knows it's OK to peel away and spend time alone if need be).

8. Shop wisely — or online.

Lots of kids with ADHD have [trouble with self-control](#). A trip to the shops this time of year could be a lot to handle. All the hype around new toys and clothes might lead to your child pestering you to buy things you don't need or can't afford. If your child tends to be overwhelmed by stores, consider shopping online instead.

1. Check in with your child

Talk to your child and identify what they look forward to the most about Christmas. Find out if there's anything they are worried about or would like to do differently this year. We know that talking to your child about how they're feeling can be hard. So in the lead-up to the holidays, you could take 20 minutes with your child to do an activity you'll both enjoy. This can create a relaxed space to start that conversation.

2. Plan ahead

Plan to spend time together, but - crucially - plan for each of you to have time to yourselves, whether that's through separate

9. Make a "comfort kit."

For some families, the holiday season is also peak [tantrum and meltdown](#) season. Lots of kids with ADHD have [trouble managing emotions](#). And if you can't head home when you notice your child getting upset, you'll need some backup. You might be able to avoid or delay meltdowns by packing a small bag with comfort items. That might be healthy snacks, a bottle of water, and even comfy clothes that can double as pyjamas if needed.

10. Give small, immediate rewards.

In the weeks leading up to the holidays, it's tempting to use [presents](#) as a bargaining chip. Try to avoid saying things like "Be good or Santa will find out!" It's more helpful to offer your child small short-term [rewards](#). For example, you can say, "If we can work together to clean up this morning, we'll watch a show this afternoon."

11. Praise good behaviour.

When your child is behaving well during a holiday event, show that you notice. Lean over and whisper, "You're doing great at listening to other people without interrupting. I'm proud of you." [Recognition and praise](#) mean a lot to kids who learn and think differently.

Anxiety

For some children, the festive period can be a time to think the holidays might be a difficult time for your child. We've put together some tips on how you can support their

activities or having some unstructured down time. For children whose parents are separated, they may worry about split loyalties and may feel very anxious if asked to make a decision about which parent to spend Christmas day with. It is often really helpful for the adults concerned to make a joint decision together, relay the decision and then work on how to make those plans work for everyone.

3. Discuss plans for time with extended family

If you are planning to spend time with extended family, check out how your child feels about this. Think about how you can

make this time the least stressful together – that could be by agreeing minimum lengths of time or where your visits and meet-ups take place.

4. Understand their needs

It can be hard, but understanding what each of you in the family needs is crucial to reducing stress and the risk of family arguments. Do some need more sleep than others? More space and time alone? Understanding what matters to each

individual in the family, and then planning ahead, is the key to reducing anxiety.

5. Get out of the house

Make sure everyone gets out of the house regularly, even if it's for a brisk walk around the block. During the holidays, the sense of cabin fever and everyone being stuck indoors for a few days can cause tensions to rise.

6. Be aware of what your child picks up on

As parents, many of us place pressure on ourselves to make the festive period a magical time for our child. This can often come at a hefty cost, and the financial pressure of Christmas can be overwhelming. If this is

something you are worried about, try to keep these conversations private and away from your child so that they don't pick up on anxieties that adults may be experiencing. It's also important to remember that the cost of a gift is not what matters, but making family time count is what it's all about.

7. Look after your health

This time of year can be a time of overindulgence: lots of food, lots of late nights, lots of sugary treats. Try and get your children involved with cooking some healthy meals, or planning some more active days to bring a bit of balance to the holidays. Looking after your child this Christmas also means looking after yourself too! Ensure you are getting time to rest and time to talk about how you're doing.

8. Do what's best for you

At this time of year, there's a lot of talk about the 'perfect Christmas'. But when it comes down to it, you know your child the best. Make decisions that suit you, even if this means doing things differently. That way you'll have a Christmas that's perfect for you and your family.

Sleep support

Sleep East will be holding a free online workshop for parents in January. Here are the details:



Thanks to funding from a National Lottery Community Grant we are delighted to offer a free ZOOM Sleep Workshop for all parents of children with sleep deprivation.

From 10 - 12.30 on Monday 10 January
Follow on support clinics 24 January and 7 February 10 - 11am

The Zoom Sleep Workshop covers:

How Sleep Works

Sleep information and strategies

Developing a good bedtime routine

Self settling

Sleeping through the night

Early waking

Maintaining a good sleep pattern

Email: joybishop@sleepeast.co.uk to book your place.

Screen time

Just One Norfolk contains huge amounts of information and guidance for parents.

Check out the link below for information about ways to reduce screen time for your child:

<https://www.justonenorfolk.nhs.uk/healthylifestyle/move-more/screen-time>

PEGs – Parental Education Growth Support

Do you live in fear of your child or their reactions?

Do you watch what you say because of the potential repercussions?

Do you avoid family situations due to conflict?

Does your child make threats to kill you or others?

Does your child damage property to get what they want?

Does your child steal from you?

If this sounds like the situation in your home, then



Norfolk SENDIASS

Information, Advice & Support Service

Contact us

Our helpline is open from Monday to Friday between 9 - 5pm.

You can book an appointment to speak with an advisor by telephoning 01603 704070, emailing norfolksendiass@norfolk.gov.uk, or via our [website submission form](#).

If your call is not picked up please leave a message and we will return your call as soon as possible.

We are currently experiencing high volumes of calls so please be patient whilst we book you the next available appointment.

ADOS Assessments at Open Arms



Open Arms are now able to offer the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS).

Open Arms is a private company, so there would be a charge for **families** to have one of these assessments.

The ADOS is a gold standard component of an autism assessment., so if you would like more information about an ADOS for an Autism assessment please call them on 01603 767498 or email m.cook@openarmsupport.co.uk.