

Helping your child cope with holiday stressors

Tips for Full Inclusion:

1. **Prepare your child in advance:** Use a calendar to help countdown to the event
2. **Practice makes progress:** Rehearse the event ahead of time. This way you and your child can identify any possible challenges or stressors. You can even let extended family know ahead of time what might be helpful for your child.
3. **Be the example:** Share with your child how you feel about the intense holiday schedule. You can even show them how you cope with the additional anxiety that comes along with the holidays.
4. **Traditions and routines:** Make a picture book to remind your child about the expected behaviors and events that may occur such as the arrival of family members that you may only see this time of year.
5. **Don't say yes to everything:** Choose the events your child participates in carefully. Just as an adult would become overwhelmed and decline some invitations, the same should be done for your child. Establishing a "safe zone" for your child to go to when excitement becomes too much is beneficial if events cannot be avoided.
6. **Trust your instincts!:** It's ok to remind family and friends of preferred behaviors around your child (such as, not to hug or push conversation.)

Social Teachable Moments:

Use the holidays as the opportunity to help promote expected social behavior in your child.

1. Discuss **options for topics** that your child can use to direct conversation, such as inquiring what gifts the other hopes for, what things they enjoy around the holidays.
2. Try and help your child avoid becoming "stuck" on one topic. **Set expectations surrounding timelines** and possibly rehearse using a timer.
3. Stretch your child's abilities in **planning, memory, organization and flexible thinking** by holding family game nights, baking together, or even crafting.
4. Help your child work on building friendships by **making a card** with a specific person in mind.
5. Encourage **empathy** by guiding your child through donation of their time or even a gift to **someone in need**. This could vary from reading to younger children to dropping off cans of food to your local pantry.



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