

Holiday Tips For Parents With Neurodiverse Children

OMAHA, NE, USA, December 18, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The holidays are a time for fun and joy, however for children who have autism spectrum disorder or are neurodiverse, it can be a difficult and uncomfortable break from their usual routine. Behaven Kids, one of Nebraska's leading providers of services for children and adolescents who have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, mental health-related issues and behavioral difficulties, offers the following tips for parents to make the holidays happy for everyone.



- Discuss holiday plans with your children. Listen for indication of worry or distress about certain activities. Respond in manners that communicate flexibility (e.g., we can take breaks) and validation (e.g., sometimes I get overwhelmed by our cousins, too).
- Leading up to holiday plans, consider backup plans. Providing two or three choices when in unfamiliar or relatively uncomfortable situations can be one way to give them autonomy.
- Limit transitions to multiple locations in a single day if possible, allowing children to find comfort and enjoy their time before loading up to travel to the next family gathering.
- Include preferred activities and the downtime to enjoy them within the holiday itinerary. If your child has some portable entertainment sources (e.g., books, low-mess art supplies), plan to bring those for use in the car or while at the destination. Incorporating enjoyable and familiar activities can support children who are uncomfortable with the unknown or deviations from routine.

- Honor your child's need to take breaks from others. While spending time with family and friends may be limited throughout the year, the pressure of engaging and tolerating nonpreferred social situations can backfire.

- Be mindful of your own perceptions and expectations of what makes a magical holiday and our kids' role in those. Parents have a tremendous amount of pressure on them during the holidays and other special occasions to make their kids' experience magical and unique. In reality, a magical holiday may simply mean a break for everyone from the pressure to perform in certain ways during the holiday season. Put the cookbook away and order some pizza.

- Have flexibility in your expectations for kids to eat certain foods. Especially for children who are neurodivergent, having access to safe foods can support their ability to enjoy and participate in holiday activities.

- Prepare friends and extended family members for your child's specific preferences or sensory sensitivities. Conversations or reminders ahead of time can help. Stand firm in your advocacy for your child. Aunt Suzy can still have a nice holiday even if your child doesn't consent to giving her hugs.

Behaven Kids is a provider of services for children and adolescents who have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, mental health-related issues and behavioral difficulties. The company provides a full range of therapy, counseling and care services to help children, parents and families at three locations in Nebraska. Behaven Kids has more than 70 professionals with a variety of credentials and expertise, including board certified behavior analysts, licensed behavior specialists, licensed mental health practitioners and certified clinical trauma professionals. Behaven Kids was founded in 2000. More information is available at BehavenKids.com and on social media @behavenkids.

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