



How to make this Christmas autism-friendly

Christmas can be a magical and festive time of year, filled with lights, music and celebrations. However, for some autistic individuals and their families, the festive season can present unique challenges.

The sensory overload, social gatherings and disruptions to routine can be overwhelming. Fortunately, there are many simple ways to make Christmas more autism-friendly, ensuring that everyone can enjoy the holiday season to its best. Read on to discover our recommendations for making Christmas more autism-friendly.

Sensory friendly decorations

The bright lights, jingling bells and glittering ornaments that decorate homes during the festive season can be overwhelming for autistic individuals, who may be hypersensitive to sensory stimuli. To create a more autism friendly environment, consider the following:

- Use soft, warm and dimmable lights instead of bright and flashing ones as this can help to create a calming ambience.
- Opt for natural and soothing decorations such as pinecones, twinkle lights and soft fabrics.
- Minimize clutter and avoid excessive decorations that can overstimulate individuals with sensory sensitivities.

Prepare a visual schedule

Many autistic individuals thrive on routines and predictability. The holiday season can disrupt these routines, leading to anxiety and stress. A visual schedule can be created that outlines the days' activities and events, to ease anxiety through letting individuals know what to expect. Both holiday and non-holiday activities can be included to maintain a sense of normal routine.

Noise management

Christmas can be a noisy time with holiday music, loud gatherings and Christmas crackers. Autistic individuals may have heightened sensitivity to noise. Some easy adjustments to make the season more autism friendly are:

- Provide noise-cancelling headphones or earplugs.
- Designate a quiet space where individuals can retreat when they need a break or to relax.
- Communicate with guests the importance of keeping noise levels manageable and low where possible.

Inclusive gift giving

When selecting gifts for autistic individuals, consider their unique interests and sensory preferences. Here are some tips to follow for inclusive gift-giving:

- Choose gifts that align with their interests.
- Avoid gifts with loud sounds or bright flashing lights that may overwhelm.
- If appropriate provide clear and simple instructions for opening gifts to reduce frustration.

Sensory friendly activities

Engaging in fun and sensory friendly activities can be a great way to celebrate Christmas with someone who may have sensory sensitivities.

- Facilitate a sensory-friendly Santa experience by scheduling a visit when quieter and less crowded, or arrange to see an organised Sensory Friendly Santa installation.
- Offer sensory bins filled with tactile materials such as rice, sand, or foam for calming sensory play. Feel free to make it fun and festive colours if appropriate.

Inclusive social gatherings

For many families, large social gatherings are an integral part of the festive celebrations. In order to make these events more inclusive for individuals with sensory sensitivities consider the following:

- Inform guests in advance about any sensory sensitivities and the need for understanding and patience.
- Offer a designated quiet space where individuals can retreat to if they become overwhelmed or just need some quiet time.
- Encourage small group interactions to reduce social pressure.

Embrace differences

Above all, it is crucial to foster an environment of acceptance and understanding during the festive season. Educate family and friends about autism and its unique challenges and strengths. Encourage open communication and empathy, so everyone can enjoy the celebrations together.



Christmas is often a time of love, joy, and togetherness, so it should be inclusive for everyone. Through taking steps to create an autism-friendly Christmas environment, you can ensure that all family members and friends can participate and enjoy the holiday season to its fullest.

Sensory accommodations, clear communication and understanding go a long way in making Christmas a magical and inclusive time for everyone. This year, let's make the holiday season brighter by embracing the beauty of diversity and celebrate everyone's different brilliant.