

In This Issue

Survival Strategies for the Holidays

by Sarah Dobosiewicz, OTR/L

Helpful Holiday Hints

by Hayley Noll Bender, OTR/L

Holiday Activity Ideas

by Molly Koustmer, OTR/L



Contact Us

3665 Kearny Villa Rd.,
Ste. 300

San Diego, CA 92123

Phone: 858-966-5829

Fax: 858-966-5859

3605 Vista Way, Ste. 201

Oceanside, CA 92056

Phone: 760-758-1620

Fax: 760-945-0758

11752 El Camino Real,
Suite 100

San Diego, CA 92130

Phone: 858-793-9591

Fax: 858-793-1153

333 H Street, Ste. 3010

Chula Vista, CA 91910

858-966-8707

Fax: 619-476-4464

Survival Strategies for the Holidays

Serve Holiday Food Ahead of Time

The holidays are often a time of traditions which can include traditional foods that are seldom offered at other times of the year. Many children become overwhelmed, stressed or anxious when presented with new and unfamiliar foods. Try making a few common holiday food items throughout the year or in the months and weeks leading up to the holiday. The more familiar your child is with a food, the more likely they are to accept, interact and possibly eat these foods.

Prepare The Meal Together

Have your child help you or other family members in the kitchen. By letting your child assist you, he or she experiences the smell and touch of the food without the pressure of having it on his or her plate. Ideas include:

- Rinsing fruit and vegetables
- Stirring muffin or bread mixes
- Preparing baking sheets for dinner rolls
- Measuring ingredients
- Throwing items away in the trash
- Serving family members/setting the table

Important Reminders

- Never force your child to try new foods
- Never force your child to finish their dinner
- Always make familiar/preferred food choices available
- Always allow for exploration and experimentation
- Always provide healthy choices
- Limit grazing

Interactive Holiday Food Ideas



Make "worms and dirt" using chocolate cookies, pudding and gummy worms.

Finger paint turkeys using pumpkin pie filling or arrange snack foods to look like a turkey.



Bake cookies! Have your child help measure and stir the ingredients or use cookie cutters. They can also help with decorating once the cookies are cooled.



Helpful Holiday Hints

The holiday season can be a stressful time. Routines are often altered: breaks from school, visiting family members, caregivers home from work, or traveling. Many children with sensory processing challenges thrive on routine and predictability. Try these strategies to help ease anxiety and stress during this time.

Make The Unpredictable More Predictable.

The unknown can be scary. Make things more predictable by letting your child know what is going to happen over the holiday period.

Make a calendar, list or picture schedule of each day's events, or create a social story for new or infrequent events. Before going to a holiday function, prepare your child by telling them who is going to be there and set the expectations for behavior. For example, tell your child he or she can high five or wave but does not have to hug everyone. Bring along a few comfort items such as a favorite toy or stuffed animal.

Routine and Structure. Aim to keep your child's general routine as normal as possible. Try to have bed time, nap time and meal times around the same time they usually occur. If you have established sensory strategies you use throughout the day, continue to incorporate them.



Create a Safe Place. It is important for your child to have access to a safe place when he or she needs to take a break. This may be an empty closet, a small room or even a pop-up tent. Have a few calm-

ing items available within this space such as pillows, fidgets, and/or books. When going to a friend or family member's house, find a room or quiet space your child can take a break in if needed.

Comfort is Key. For children who are sensitive to textures of clothing, the thought of putting on lace dresses or tight sweaters may make their skin crawl. While it may be important for your family to wear specific clothing items at holiday gatherings and events, be aware of your child's sensory preferences and choose clothing items accordingly. Allow your child a choice of clothing items and involve him or her in trying the outfit on to ensure sure it "feels right." Consider packing an extra change of clothes and allow your child to change if he or she becomes uncomfortable in the chosen outfit.



OUR
SCHEDULE!

Holiday Activity Ideas

Fall is here and soon it will be getting dark early and our children will be spending more time indoors. Here are some fun indoor holiday games that your kids can do to keep busy.

Don't Topple The Teepee

Just like the game pick up sticks! Collect a variety of pencils and colored pencils from around your house. Cut a section of a toilet paper or paper towel ring and place the pencils inside the ring. Everyone take turns removing a pencil without collapsing the Teepee.



This activity works on motor skills, turn taking, attention, and visual motor coordination.



Pumpkin Toilet Paper Roll Bowling

Grab at least 3 rolls of toilet paper and have your child

draw a face on each roll. Stack the rolls in a pyramid shape in the hallway or large space. Have your child roll a small ball or pumpkin to knock down the tower.

This activity works on turn taking, counting, and motor coordination.

Candy Cane Hunt

Hide a variety of candy canes around your house and have your child try to find them all!

This activity works on visual perceptual skills and counting.

