

Welcome to our final newsletter of 2020!



As you may expect as we hurtle towards the festive season, this edition focusses upon providing some information to help support children during this time, as well as a range of ideas and activities to help entertain families over the period of school closures.



Wishing all families and schools a Happy Christmas, From The Autism Support Team

Ready for Christmas?

Christmas can be a tricky time for children with Autism, there are lots of changes within the environment. Things look different; with homes, streets, and schools being decorated with bright lights and colours. We are exposed to different sounds and noises with carols and music being played in shops and sung at school. The usual school routines are altered, there are different festive activities included in the daily timetable, such as school plays, Christmas fairs, Christmas dinners, not to forget the tradition of wearing a Christmas jumper! Whilst many of these changes can be overwhelming and sometimes distressing for children, it is not to say that all children will respond in this way, however all children can be prepared for these changes.

Preparing

- Prepare your child by discussing the facts around Christmas, what it means and what will happen. For example, make sure they know when you will be putting up the Christmas decorations and include your child in the preparation.
- Visual supports like calendars can be really helpful to remind your child of some of the upcoming events. Such as when the school holiday starts to when friends and relatives may be visiting.

Schedules

Many autistic people benefit from some routine and you may wish to try and make your festive holiday as predictable as possible:

- Try and keep some aspects of your daily routine the same in the lead up to Christmas and on Christmas Day itself. For example getting ready or keeping breakfast to the usual time.
- Unpredictability around present opening can be difficult. Perhaps it would help if your child knew what presents they will be receiving.
- Don't feel that the presents all need to be opened on Christmas morning in the traditional way as this may cause added pressure and stress. If they have several gifts you could open a few in the days before or following Christmas and spread the celebration.
- Incorporate a familiar Christmas activity that they enjoy into their daily schedule. This could be opening the advent calendar or switching on the Christmas tree lights. .

Decorations

- Get them involved in putting any decorations up (don't do it when they are sleeping), introduce your child gradually to any changes in the environment – give them the chance to get familiar with any decorations
- Try and keep decorations that might overload them away from communal areas, e.g. flashing Christmas lights could go in the hallway rather than in the living room.

It might be worthwhile to keep a dedicated Christmas-free zone in your home for moments that your child may find stressful. In this way they can spend time in an area that is unaltered and familiar to them.

- Make up a booklet illustrating items and events to support your child to build up an idea of what to expect. For example, use pictures of Christmas tree/decorations, presents, the type of food you might eat.

Christmas Resources



Resources

[Website with ideas of Christmas activities at home](#)

[Calming strategies for Kids](#)

[BBC blog about Autism and Christmas](#)

[Website with gift ideas for ASD kids](#)

Autism Friendly Activities

[Autism friendly Santa's Grotto](#)

[Events at London Zoo](#)

[Transport Museum Quiet Morning](#)

[Science Museum Early Bird](#)

[Autism Friendly Cinema](#)



Online Theatres

[Unicorn Theatre](#)

Super Seven



Here are some fun festive activities to try at home

- Make some salt dough decorations [here](#) is a recipe and video
- Make a festive snow globe [here](#) are the instructions
- Make Christmas treats to eat [here](#) is a visual recipe for a Christmas tree cone treat
- [Visual gingerbread man recipe](#)—get that festive smell, use it to make festive shapes
- Festive sensory fun there are ideas [here](#) e.g. tinsel slime!?
- Make paper chains—any paper will do [here](#) is a Twinkl free Christmas themed paper chain you can make. Check out their website for loads more free activities www.twinkl.co.uk
- Christmas Bingo anyone?! [Here](#)

Loads more ideas [here](#) if you are feeling crafty!

Video links

[Video of tips for Christmas](#)

[Makaton Santa message](#)

[Singing Hands Christmas Makaton songs](#)

[Video cooking recipes for people with learning difficulties and autism—this one chocolate truffles!](#)

[BBC News interview from 2019 about sensory overload at Christmas](#)

PDFs

[National Autistic Society Christmas resources](#)

[Communicate in Print \(symbol\) Christmas cards to print and colour](#)

[Communicate in Print Christmas activities](#)

Trainings

We continue to run autism courses for parents through You Tube and Zoom. Please contact Cygnet@southwark.gov.uk for the over 5's course and Blagoje.Vucinic@southwark.gov.uk for the under 5's