



Happy *holidays!*

A freshly brewed and delicious way to learn more about speech and language therapy and occupational therapy as used in the treatment of fragile X syndrome

I said to Tracy the other day..."I just LOOOOVE the holidays! Parties, wassail, long services, more parties, visits to Santa, shopping, seeing relatives and friends we haven't seen in ages, even more parties..."

The list went on... and on... and on... Always the voice of reason, Tracy reminds me of the numerous stories we hear from parents about how difficult the holidays can be. There are many unexpected transitions, disrupted schedules and

routines, loud parties, late nights, air travel or long car rides. Yes, for many families the holidays can be more "hellish" than "happy."

To help prevent that occurrence, we've compiled a list of reminders and strategies to help your holidays be more successful and less stressful. We think it's a great idea to cut this list out and put it on the fridge! Enjoy!!

VISUAL SUPPORTS

- Prepare a holiday schedule. Make this a visual schedule if needed (check the website www.do2learn.com if you need visual schedule ideas). Plan structured activities and events for each day and make sure they are on the schedule.
- Consider use of a "mini-schedule" to prepare your child for the day's events, especially if it involves long car rides or many stops. Be sure to have this schedule in the car—velcro it to the dashboard if you need to.
- Develop social stories around relatives who may be visiting. Include pictures where you can (check out Carol Gray's web page on social stories: www.thegraycenter.org).
- Consider teaching and practicing social scripts or routines for your child so that he can participate in activities. Remember, giving a child a "purpose" or "job" will help reduce anxiety! (See Marcia Braden's "Have Purpose will Transition" article in the Winter 2005 NFXF Quarterly.) For example, you might want to teach your child to say, "May I have your coat?" Then she's responsible for putting guests' coats away.
- If your child will be spending nights at a relative's house, be sure to have a transition object or picture around this activity. A sleeping bag, or, a picture of Grandma's house could be used to show that he will be spending the night there.

ROUTINES

- Try to avoid canceling regular activities; maintain as much of a household routine as possible.
- Try to keep the bedtime routine as well as medication and mealtime routines as consistent as possible.
- Do not let your child's bedroom become the guestroom for visitors.

- Ask relatives to stagger visits to your house if necessary.
- Before the holidays begin, set up respite options for yourself.

SENSORY INPUTS

- Remember which activities are calming for your child, and keep those in her schedule during the holiday. If you have a "sensory diet," continue to use it.
- Designate a "quiet" corner in your house, or at the house you are staying at, for your child to go to when he needs to.
- Try to avoid crowds or congested areas if the visual and auditory input is overwhelming for your child.
- Develop and keep your "Fragile X Emergency Kit" with you at all times!
- When selecting holiday outfits, respect your child's likes and dislikes for certain textures.
- Warn family members that your child has a more pleasant experience if she can determine whether or not/when to kiss/hug relatives.
- Be aware of the increased aromas during the holiday season. Try and limit use of noxious potpourri and candles.
- If necessary, gradually move the furniture and decorate your house, allowing your child time to get used to the changes.
- Train for your "gift-opening" procedures, or use a social story with pictures or visual schedule. Minimize direct attention while your child is opening gifts.
- Consider bringing favorite food choices for your child to holiday events.