

OCTOBER 2021

TIMELY TOPICS

JORDAN CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER



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PREPARING FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON

The holiday season can be exciting and fun, but it can also be stressful when you have small children with special needs. We want them to experience all of the holiday activities and get-togethers, however, we need to do some extra planning and preparation in order to help our young kids know what is coming.

Over the next three months, there can be lots of changes in routines, new people, and traveling. All of these changes can be very challenging for our toddlers and preschoolers. Tantrums and meltdowns are much more common when there are lots of changes!

Your child and family are unique! You know what works well for your child and what does not. This month I'll cover some general information and strategies that can help decrease stress around the holidays. However, make sure to consult your child's pediatrician, teachers, and other professionals that are familiar with your child's specific strengths and needs if you need additional support.

PARENT CLASSES:

No Classes in October.

Classes will resume in November.

Class and registration information will be in November's newsletter.

Travel Tips

Traveling to new places requires a lot of time and preparation under the best circumstances. During the holiday season that stress can be higher than usual. Here are some tips and strategies to help your trip go a little more smoothly.

Decide What's Right For Your Family.

- Decide whether a longer trip is feasible this year.
- Would it be easier if family came to you instead?
- Would it be easier if you waited on bigger trips until your child is a little older?

Pack with Purpose.

- Bring whatever you need to help your child be comfortable.
- Toys, snacks, blankets, and comfort items should be ready to go.
- Remember to bring headphones, chargers, and batteries.

Ask for Help.

- Check with the airports and other places you'll be about their sensory-friendly or quiet rooms, family bathrooms, and other accommodations.

Plan Ahead.

- What's the best time for you and your family to travel?
- Check with the airline if there are accommodations for young kids with special needs (early boarding, seating arrangements, etc.). You can check with your hotels about accommodations as well.
- Do you have enough time for breaks during your travel?
- What are possible sensory challenges?
- What are your plans if flights get delayed or cancelled or if the weather is too bad for driving?



Prepare Your Child.

- Based on your child's level of understanding, talk to them about the trip.
- Where are you going?
- How are you getting there?
- What will happen on the plane or in the car?
- What can they do during the flight or car ride?
- Can you take your child to the airport ahead of time to practice?



Have Your Contact Info with Your Child.

- Make sure your child has your name and number on them somewhere in case they get lost.
- Also, take a picture of your child so you can remember what they were wearing and have the most up-to-date photo to show others if they get lost.



Holiday Outings

There are so many fun and exciting activities during the holidays and you may want to do as many as you can. However, keep in mind what your child is able to do right now and build around that.

Prioritize Your Outings.

- Knowing your child and their needs, consider which outings they can handle and which ones may be too much.
- For instance, your child may be ok going to the pumpkin patch and you feel confident with that outing, but know the big holiday party will be too loud and crowded and disrupt your child's bedtime.
- Try not to have multiple outings or events per day.

Stay Realistic.

- Think about what your child is able to do right now.
- Your child may not wear the fancy new outfit or costume or eat new foods or want to be near people. That's ok!
- Prep family and friends ahead of time as well. Let them know what to expect from your child and how your child will respond best to them.
- Be patient with your child and yourself!



Be Prepared.

- What are the possible sensory challenges?
- Who will be there? Is it someone your child is familiar with?
- Who is going to keep eyes on your child?
- Have a Plan B.
 - If your child gets really upset and you need to leave, what's the plan? Is there a quiet room you can take your child to calm down? Will everyone leave? Will one adult take your child home and everyone else stays?
- Practice ahead of time.
 - For instance, take your child to your aunt's house where the holiday party will be. You can practice putting on the costume and ringing the doorbell. You can introduce a couple of new foods that might be at holiday meals.
- Bring all of your child's favorite snacks and comfort items.

Extended Family and Friends

If your family and friends have not seen your child in awhile or are not aware of their needs, you'll need to help them understand.



Tell your family how long you will be able to stay and when you plan on leaving.

- Also, ask if there is a quiet room that you can use if your child gets overwhelmed and needs a break.



Let your family know how to best interact with your child.

- Do loud voices scare your child?
- Does your child want to be held or picked up or not?
- Does your child prefer to be left alone for several minutes, but warms up later?



Tell your family how to include your child in the activity or meal.

- What is one food your child loves that could be offered at the table?
- Could your child hand out gifts, utensils, or other items?



Bring other necessities such as comfort items, snacks and drinks, iPad, etc to help your child feel comfortable in the new place.



Let your family know any diet restrictions or other food sensitivities your child has.

- This is particularly important for allergies. It's also good for your family to know specific foods your child avoids, has difficulty swallowing, etc.

General Tips and Strategies

Here are a few more general tips to help your holiday activities and outings run as smoothly as possible!



Keep routines the same when you can.

- This is especially important for meal times and bed times.

Take care of your other kids.

- Give them the opportunity to do some of the holiday activities they enjoy!

Take care of yourself.

- Schedule some time that you can do something you enjoy. Call on friends or family to help you with this.

Keep your activities and traditions simple (you don't have to be Martha Stewart!)

- Simple activities and traditions work best for families with toddlers and preschoolers.
- Choose what's important for your family!

Avoid making big changes during this time.

- Potty training, giving up the binky, switching rooms and/or beds, etc.
- You'll be busy and stressed enough -- when schedules are back to normal, you can tackle one of those changes you want to make.

