





The Holiday Blues

- Parents expect the holidays to be a joyous time by traveling to new places to visit family and friends
- There will be lots of wonderful people, great food, new experiences, and fun activities
- There's only one problem
- Their child with autism, who wants to keep the world the same, is going to be overwhelmed and stressed out by the holiday activities
- This webinar talks about practical ways that parents (and those who help them) can make the holidays fun for a child with ASD.





Overview

- A developmental approach to dealing with the holidays for children with ASD.
- A way for consultants to coach families during holidays
- 5 Rules for Holiday Fun
- 20 Transition Tricks
- Case scenarios



A Developmental Approach: Case Scenarios

- In talking to parents of a child with ASD, we have to take into consideration the child's unique profile:
- Children at FDLs 1-3: Sensitive to the sensory environment, to familiar objects, and to their parents (especially their primary caretaker). They will be in their Comfort Zones and protect themselves.
- Children at FDL 4-5: Blinders are off. Will be the most anxious children to soothe in the holiday chaos. Will need the most care
- For higher functioning children the holidays can be a fun and an interesting series of experiences IF the parents know the secrets.



Rule #1: Help Parents Plan for The Best

"If you are the parent of a child with autism, don't expect the holidays to be fun for your child. Sorry."

"Expect the worst and plan for the best..



Then, it will turn out better than you think.





Plan for the Best: Tricks

- Literally make a plan for holiday activities. Write it out.
- · What will you do for:
 - Getting in the car?
 - Going out to restaurants?
 - Entering someone's home?
 - Eating in new places?
 - Going shopping, holiday events, movies (good luck!)?

- Dealing with siblings?	
– Tantrums and misbehavior (see last rule)?	
Don't sweat the small stuff! Keep it simple!	



Dr. Rick says. . .

If you are yelling and/or getting angry YOU are doing something wrong!



Rule #2: Honor Your Child's Profile

- The Child's Profile is the key to making holidays a success:
- Case 1: The child is not with us very much and loves to watch baby videos
- Case 2: The child is beginning to be more with us and is showing increasing anxiety and behavior problems at home and preschool
- Case 3: The child is talking in 1-2 word phrases and starting to enjoy simple, one theme pretend play (feeding a puppet)
- Case 4: The child understands 'time' and can put ideas together



Going to the Bathroom Can be a Challenge





Honor Your Child's Profile: Tricks

- 1. Bring the child's favorite CZ activities if you can
 - Blanky
 - Stuffed animals, dinosaurs, cars, etc.
 - Books, puzzles
 - Tablets, iPhone, Movies
 - Flicking, twirly, fumbly objects
- 2. Use sensory barriers/blinders
 - Hats,
 - Headphones
 - Carry the child



Honor Your Child's Profile: Tricks

- 3. Bring some fun cause and effect toys
 - -Jack in the box
 - Pop-up push-button toys
 - -Simple puzzles
- 4. Favorite books, movies, videos
- 5. Use the hotel bed as a trampoline
- 6. Go shopping for collectibles/obsessions



Rule #3: Arrange the Holiday Environment

- · New holiday environments will be the most challenging
- · But home environments where parents will be hosting a party can be just as threatening to the child with ASD
- · How far ahead of time should you prepare your child?
 - Case 1 (FDL 1-3): Not at all
 - Case 2 (FDL 3-4): When it's happening
 - Case 3 (FDL 5): A day in advance

Case 4 (HFA/FDL 6): 2-3 days in advance. Use a	
calendar and pictures.	



Parties are Fun?





Arrange the Environment: Tricks

- · Call ahead to your destination
- If you are having the company at your house, make sure you have an extra hand if you can.
 - Babysitter/extra hand/grandma/pa
- If you are going to someone else's house, disclose your child's condition to the hosts
- Plan to have a cozy, quiet, familiar feeling, safe space in the holiday house
- Enter 'through the back door' and gradually let your child experience the new environment (e.g. sit on the steps).
 Desensitize by degrees



Arrange the Environment: Tricks

- Use calendars, schedules, lists, and sequences
- Give plenty of time for transitions.
 - Use countdowns and timing
- · Have treats and fun activities in the new setting
- Favorite foods (bring them with you)
- Bribes & Prizes: Favorite places (namely, McDonalds!)
- Collectables
- · Fun activities planned
- Use the "Tussle" trick
- · Use pretend play. . .



Arrange the Environment: Tricks

- Play out the holiday using pretend scenarios for children with HFA:
 - Parent puppet/doll: "We're going to grandma's house for Christmas!"
 - Child doll (Andy): "No, no, no. I don't want to go to grandma's house!"
 - Parent: "No grandma's house? Come on Andy. You'll have fun."
 - Child: "No grandma's house!"
 - Parent (tempting): "We'll have Thomas the Tank Engines at grandma's house."
 - Child: "Thomas?"
 - Parent: "And Henry, Gordon, Percy, and Emily!!"
 - Child: "And Emily? OK. Let's go to grandma's house."
- · Fables: The 'No Go Gorilla'



Arrange the Environment: Tricks

If worse goes to worst, go to Rule #5: The Good, The Bad & The Ugly

In the meantime Follow PLAY Methods and Principles. . .



Rule #4: Use PLAY Methods/Principles

- Through all holiday transitions Use PLAY Project Methods:
 - Read the child's cues
 - Follow your child's lead
 - Mirror/reflect feelings!
 - -Get engagement and interaction
- · Have "Fun with people"
- · Put in the time



Follow the Fun





Fun Holiday Activities for Kids with ASD

- Get outside
- Build a snowman
- · Get into nature and collect sticks
- Go swimming in the hotel pool
- · Wander around in nature
- Collect what your child likes
- (Follow you child's lead)





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Rule #5: The Good, The Bad, & The Ugly

- Plan on whining, temper tantrums, and aggression. . .
 - Getting dressed
 - When stopping a fun activity
 - Fighting in the car
 - Eating at the restaurant
 - Entering the host's home
 - Going somewhere you thought would be 'fun'



The Good, The Bad, & The Ugly





GBU Rules: Do's and Don'ts

- Nurture, nurture, nurture
- The 'mirror' technique:
 - Feeling reflections
 - Behavior reflections
 - Language reflections
- Do <u>not</u> ask <u>questions</u>.

 Make statements:

 "You're mad because your brother took your toyll!"
- The 'never ever ever ever ever ever rule'
- Rule by the rules, not emotions
- Toe over the line rule
- Message of competence
- GOYA



Time Out Strategies From Least to Most Severe

- 3 Warnings: Toe Over the Line
- Mini time out in a chair (Remember, it's not punishment)
- · 5-minute time out in room or chair
- 10-minute time out if not cooperative in room (make room safe!)
- Holding ("I love you very much, but you may not hit or break."



GBU: Tricks—Tantrums in the car

- · Distract & Prevent Upsets
 - Rewards & treats
 - Favorite activities
- Ignore ugly behavior
- Warn, then Threaten (Plan on it!) (for FDLs 5-6)
 - Plan on extra time!!!
- Car Time Out (CTO) (for FDLs 5-6)
 - -15 minutes by the clock
 - Read
 - War and Peace
- Warn about another CTO



GBU: In the Restaurant

- · Feed the child ahead of time
- · Bring McDonalds
- Have the child eat dessert while you eat dinner
- · Bring distracters and activities
- If whining, not sitting, etc:
 - Ignore Ugly, then give warnings
 - 1-2-3-Magic
 - Plan for one of you to go for a Car Time Out

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Summary & Conclusion

If Parents Follow the 5 Holiday Rules for Children with ASD. . . .

- #1 Expect the Worst
- #2 Honor Your Child's Profile
- #3 Arrange the Environment
- #4 Use PLAY Methods & Principles
- #5 Follow The Good, The Bad, & The Ugly



The Holidays will be wonderful!!







