



Aspect's top tips for a less stressful festive season

This time of year can be particularly stressful for Autistic people.

Noise, different smells, extra socialising, lots of expectations, the pressure to make it the 'perfect day'... all of this can make the festive season tricky.

That's why we're sharing our tips below – for a less stressful time for everyone!



Do it your own way

It can be easy to think there's only one way to 'do it right'. But there isn't. Try to let go of some of the expectations of the day. Whatever works for you and your family is OK.



Time and space

If you're hosting family and friends, you might like to make one of the bedrooms a chill-out space. Mention it when people arrive, so everyone knows it's available if they need some quiet time.



Conversation cards

Making small talk can be hard, especially with people you might not see often. Conversation cards on the table with simple, inclusive topics can be helpful.



Great greetings

Not everyone is comfortable with physical touch as a form of greeting. Ask people how they would like to be greeted such as a hug, hand-shake, fist bump or wave. Parents or a trusted person can help by making sure boundaries are respected.



Less-pressure presents

Sometimes the pressure of opening presents in front of others and showing the 'correct' response can be too much. Allow people to open gifts on their own, when they choose.



Expect the expected

When you invite people, include a schedule of timings and activities. Knowing what to expect can help Autistic people feel more relaxed.



5-senses safe

When it's noisy, smelly, and kids are running around, it can be too much sensory input. Consider ways to reduce it – use headphones to block out loud noises, consider the lighting or provide sunglasses. Zoning out to a family holiday movie can be a great way to decompress, and keep children entertained at the same time.



Familiar foods

Some Autistic people have trouble with certain foods. If you're hosting, let people know they're welcome to bring their 'safe' foods. And if others bring a plate, it's less work for you too!