

Include Autism this Christmas



Prepare for the Christmas countdown

From hanging stockings and eating mince pies to visiting Santa's Grotto, Christmas involves many traditions and changes to routines. Autistic people can find these changes difficult. Help them by preparing well in advance and always explain when and why things are happening. Importantly, if someone doesn't want to join in – don't make them!



Make shopping easier for all

Heaving crowds and loud music is enough to put most people off Christmas shopping, but for autistic people this can be really unbearable. Sensory aids like headphones, ear defenders or sunglasses can make things easier or alternatively shopping online means people can buy what they need from the comfort of their own homes.



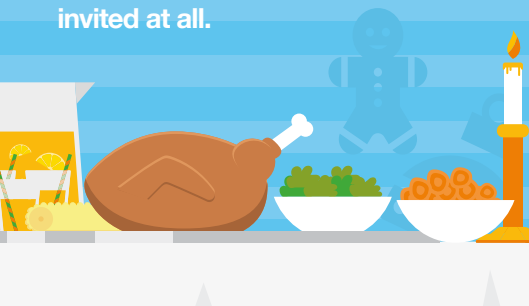
Consider your decorations

Most would agree that Christmas crackers are loud, tacky and annoying, so do you need them? The same goes for brash decorations or flashy Christmas lights. If there are going to be loud noises or bright lights, let the autistic person know to help them prepare. They might want to take part or choose a different activity.



Plan parties to suit all guests

Love them or hate them, this season is full of parties. Knowing the details in advance can reduce anxiety for autistic people. Turning down music, letting people leave early and providing a quieter space for breaks also make parties more welcoming for all! Please invite autistic people to your parties. It's much better to receive an invitation than not be invited at all.



Think differently about presents

Many autistic people struggle with uncertainty or vagueness so receiving wrapped and surprise gifts can be stressful. Ask autistic people what presents they would like and give them time and space to open them. Depending on the person you may want to get rid of wrapping paper altogether – and of course this is also good for the environment!



Let people do Christmas their own way

Not everyone celebrates Christmas, and for lots of different reasons autistic young people and their families may prefer to ditch certain 'traditions' and do things their way. If people aren't taking part in the celebrations in the way you'd expect it's best not to draw attention to it, and let them enjoy Christmas their own way.

