



CASD CHAT E-Newsletter

Holidays During the Pandemic

Dear CASD families and friends,

I hope this finds your family well and safe!

The fall and winter holidays are typically times for families to come together and celebrate, but the pandemic presents challenges to how we can safely accomplish this. Just as graduations and birthdays were often celebrated in a different manner this past year, holiday get-togethers present new challenges. For families with children on the spectrum, these changes may actually make some aspects of holiday celebrations easier because of smaller gatherings. However, for many families, the change will present new challenges as everyone adjusts to a different type of celebration.

With that in mind, we would like to offer a few suggestions to maintain the spirit of the celebration:

- **Slow down!** Take a deep breath and remember that holidays are times of celebration and reduce your to-do list, taking a realistic view of what can be done that brings joy. Make sure you take a few minutes for yourself (If you are familiar with the CASD CHAT, you may recall that Yetta Myrick often reminded us to take a little time for ourselves). There are a variety of meditation apps to guide you (some of which only take a few minutes) to help you reduce your own anxiety and remind yourself about what you are thankful for in these trying times.
- **Make a plan for the holiday**, listing what will stay the same as past years (for example - favorite foods!) and what will change (the location of the celebration? Who will be present?). Ask for input on the meal menu or other activities from your family, providing reasonable options to choose from.
- **Think of new ways to celebrate the holiday.** Make it a family project (or If your kids enjoy crafts and can work independently, they can work alone): create decorations which can be as simple as paper chains in the colors of the holiday to hang from curtain rods or the backs of chairs, to paper cut outs of shapes associated for the holiday. Have the kids go outside and gather dry leaves to make a Thanksgiving wreath. If you have budding cooks,

decorating sugar cookies cut out in holiday shapes to make a special dessert.

- **Try to provide a few options to allow the child to choose from.** Most of the changes to celebrations require some decision making. Provide choices up front. This allows you to focus on options that are possible, which can help reduce disappointment (and meltdowns).
- **Generate a schedule for the holidays to help kids who need routines to feel comfortable.** Involve them in making the schedule if possible, by providing options (for example, "Should we make cookies before or after lunch?"). Allow them to list times for favorite activities with limitations (for example, they can watch a movie after making decorations, followed by outside play; they can go sledding as long as they wear a mask).
- **Don't forget to plan times of rest.** Identify fun holiday themed movies for a break for the family!
- **Help your child understand why things are different.** If your child is still learning why COVID-related restrictions are in place, or is working on wearing a mask, [check out the resources available through Children's National.](#)
- **Think of new ways to join with family and friends who cannot be present.** Many of us have become more comfortable with using technology to connect to co-workers as well as family and friends – or have children who are experts with technology. If someone has a teleconferencing account (such as Zoom or FaceTime), see if they can set up a tele-social gathering. It may be brief to coincide with the planned meal to share a toast or a later time to swap stories about the meal, celebrating the successes (like your fabulous dessert) and the failures (like the vegetables that were burned).
- **Set up different online socialization opportunities for the kids to swap stories;** keep it as brief as your child wants. Help your child prepare for the event by prompting them to think about what they want to share; making a list to help them remember their ideas may be helpful. Online social get-togethers can be as brief or as long as participants want – as long as they are enjoyable;-)

We know this holiday season will look different and present new challenges, but we hope these tips and resources will help to keep morale high. We are all in this together, and we wish you happiness as we continue through the holiday season!

Be well and stay safe,
Dr. Angie Bollich

Children's National Hospital COVID-19 Resources

Children's National Hospital is regularly [updating the Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Resources webpage.](#)

Community Resources & Events

A Panel Discussion with our very own faculty member, Dr. Allison Ratto.

Dr. Allison Ratto, a clinical psychologist at CASD, will be speaking as part of a panel of self-advocates, parents, and clinicians on the experiences of girls and women on the autism spectrum. The virtual panel discussion will take place on 11/10 at 7 PM.

Fall Community Events

Project Search Virtual Information Session - 11/18 from 6:30-7:30 on Zoom
Ivymount Virtual After School Clubs (Games Club, Cooking Club, IvyMoves Club)

Resources on Racism/Supporting Black People

Spectrum Support's Social Stories on Racism
ASAN's What is Police Violence?: A Plain Language Booklet
@TheMorganCruise Worksheets for Black Children

Safety Resources

Behavioral Directions LLC's Safety Teaching Protocol

National and Local Government Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
World Health Organization
DC Department of Health
Maryland Department of Health
Virginia Department of Health
U.S Department of Education's Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C Dispute Resolution Procedures
U.S Department of Education's Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B Dispute Resolution Procedures