

Handling the Holidays

It might not always feel like it here in San Diego, but fall is officially here! This is one of our most favorite times of year that not only kicks off the holiday season, but also offers almost endless fun and creative ways to promote your child's development of speech and language, fine motor skills, and more (without them even knowing)! While the holidays offer many of us a welcomed break from our daily routines and schedules, for many children with special needs a change in schedule can be stressful and overwhelming. During the holidays, routines are greatly disrupted with no school, extra shopping trips, and holiday gatherings. New situations and unpredictable outcomes make it difficult for children to understand what is **EXPECTED** of them. It is important to remember that children crave routines because they are repetitive and predictable, helping them to make sense of the world.

Our *Handling the Holidays* newsletters are dedicated to providing you with ideas for making this wonderful, but sometimes overwhelming season, a bit more manageable, fun, and educational for everyone! November's newsletter is focused on how to help your child handle changes in routines and expectations. Be sure to stay tuned for December's newsletter with even more ideas.

HANDLING CHANGES IN ROUTINE AND EXPECTATIONS

As parents and therapists we can help alleviate some of the negative feelings such as stress by showing them what is **EXPECTED** in specific situations in a variety of ways:

Social Stories

- Social stories help teach children self-awareness, and self-regulation in new situations by showing them what is **EXPECTED**.
- Social stories not only explain what will happen at an event, but they also explain what children are **EXPECTED** to do, or how they are **EXPECTED** to react in certain situations.
- When writing a social story, include **where** and **when** the situation occurs, **who** is involved, **how** events are sequenced, **what** occurs, and **why**.
- Statements can refer to a person's **internal state, thoughts, feelings, opinions, motivation, or physical condition/health**.
- Social stories are meant to be tailored to an individual's needs, interests, and abilities.
- These stories are written from a first person perspective. Use pronouns **I** and **my** frequently throughout the story. Often, the very first sentence is "My name is _____."

*****Remember to ALWAYS include what is EXPECTED of your child. Some examples of EXPECTED behaviors include:**

*When we open presents, I **take turns** and open one present at a time.*

*I can **use my words** to ask for a break.*

*I sit at the dinner table with a **calm body, calm voice, and quiet hands**.*

*When I go shopping with my mom or dad, I hold their hand really tight. I walk beside them with **quiet hands**.*

- Children learn best with visual input. Adding pictures to your stories can be very beneficial for children.
- Provide your child with as many opportunities as possible to practice their **EXPECTED** behaviors.

November, 2013

Inside this issue:

Ways to help your child handle changes in the routine during the holiday season through social stories and visual supports

Exploring Fall Through Language

Fall Book List



Reminders:

- The K.I.D.S. Clinic will be closed for Thanksgiving: November 27th-29th
- **Happy Thanksgiving!**
- You can always print your own copy of our current and past newsletters from our website at <http://www.kidstherapyassociates.com/news/newsletter.cfm>



Visual Supports

For many children who are visual learners, the use of visual schedules can help them better understand expectations, thus reducing anxiety and potential negative behaviors.

Visual Calendar

- Make a calendar with your child and mark different events on your calendar with different colors such as:
 - School parties*
 - School break*
 - Family and friend gatherings*
- Talk about the calendar every day, what have you already done, and how many days until the next event.

Keep Consistency

- It is important to remember to keep parts of your day consistent.
- Have a certain time of day everyday for your child to play outside for a specific amount of time.
- Set aside craft time which can include self-regulating activities such as playing with playdoh .
- Do your best to keep meal times and bed times as consistent as possible during the holiday break.
- Look at the schedule with your child in **advance**. Talk about what will be the same and what will change or be a little different.

Picture Schedule

- Make a visual schedule for your child's daily routines and incorporate any holiday events within the schedule. This will help them to understand the sequence of events and when they can expect to go home.
- You can make the schedule as specific (steps of one task) or broad (a full day's schedule) as your child needs to be successful
- There are many ways to make a visual schedule:
 - Velcro strip with detachable pictures
 - iPad apps
 - Word schedules
 - Check off schedules
- The internet offers many options and templates. Here are a few we've found:

www.handsinautism.org/pdf/How_To_Visual_Schedules.pdf

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/first-then-visual-schedule/id355527801>

www.autismspeaks.org/docs/sciencedocs/atn/visual_supports.pdf

www.do2learn.com/picturecards/howtouse/schedule.htm

Favorite Fall Books for Younger Children:

Leaf Man by Lois Ehlert

Red Leaf, Yellow Leaf by Lois Ehlert

Autumn is Here! by Heidi Pross Gray

It's Fall! by Linda Glaser

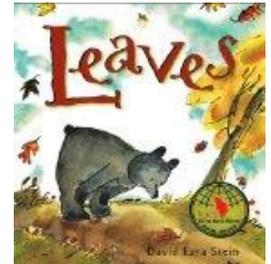
Leaf Jumpers by Carole Gerber

We're Going on a Leaf Hunt by Steve Metzger

Awesome Autumn by Bruce Goldstone

Tap the Magic Tree by Christie Matheson

Leaves by David Ezra Stein



Holiday Expectations

During the holidays there are often changes to expectations about roles and tasks we are expected to carry out. These include hosting and attending family gatherings, participating in gift exchanges, spending time with less familiar people, and visiting new places. These changes can be tough for all of us!

Specific Tasks and Scripts

During times that you know may be particularly difficult for your child to stay regulated, provide them with specific tasks and scripts to help them participate in holiday activities such as:

- Greeting each new guest with an ornament to hang on the tree → "Hi, Would you like an ornament for the tree?"
- Taking coats at the door to put on the bed or in a closet → "Hi, may I take your coat?"
- Passing out candy canes, cups, or napkins → "Hi, would you like a candy cane/cup/napkin?"
- Alerting family members that it's time to light the menorah

Give Choices

Whenever possible, include your child in holiday festivities by giving them some control over their environment and offering them choices.

- **Decorating**- "Should we put the red, or green wreath on the door?"
- **Dressing**- "Do you want to wear your white or navy collared shirt?"
- **Dining**- "Should I make corn or peas with our ham tonight?"
- **Down time**- "Do you want to ride your bike, or jump rope?"

Provide Opportunities to Practice

Practice and model the **EXPECTED** behaviors ahead of time. **Always** remember to teach a new skill first in a quiet, supportive one-on-one setting before you ask them to implement the skill in a more challenging and distracting setting.



Website:
www.kidstherapyassociates.com

Address:
11838 Bernardo Plaza Court,
Suite 110,
San Diego, CA 92128

Telephone
858-673-KIDS (5437)



Fall Nature Walk

Fall is a great time of year to hit the beautiful San Diego trails or parks to explore and practice language. All of the changes in colors, sights, sounds, and temperatures provide nearly endless things to talk about. During your nature walk, you and your child can use your senses to explore nature as well as develop vocabulary and language skills.

Nature Walk Vocabulary:

Temperatures, weather patterns, moss, bark, trail marker, colors of leaves, shapes of leaves, textures, tree types, tree parts (branches, stumps, roots), types of bugs, animal names, habitat, etc.

Language Topics:

- Changes in the weather
- Compare and contrast leaves
- Ask your child about what they hear
- What do they smell?
- What do they see?
- Discuss where different animals live

Additional Activities:

1. Bring a camera to take pictures of your child’s favorite things. Then recall what you saw when looking at the pictures later on. You can also use an ipad!
2. Create a picture book to reinforce new fall time vocabulary.
3. Collect leaves and acorns to use for fall crafts. Use a magnifying glass to examine closely.
4. Help your child draw pictures of what they saw, while using their language to describe.

Use this visual to help your child describe!

<p>I see</p> 				
<p>I hear</p> 				
<p>I feel</p> 				

