

# PFA Tips

## Holiday Tips

It's time for holiday fun! Well, it's supposed to be fun, but this time of year can feel stressful and overwhelming for families. Here are some ideas to help keep the holidays cheerful.

1. **Make the wrapping as fun as the gift.** Why not use colored bubble-wrap instead of wrapping paper? Popping those bubbles can be a great sensory stimulus.

2. **Open gifts all day long.** Or over multiple days. Opening all of those gifts at once can be overwhelming. Or, you find that your child is only interested in playing with the gift he or she has just opened. Consider taking lots of breaks and extend your holiday.

3. Despite its prevalence, not everyone understands autism. **Share with family and friends tips that are helpful for their interactions with your child** - and what's NOT helpful. You can begin by sharing, "PFA Tips: Explaining Autism Using Everyday Examples" at [pathfindersforautism.org/articles/newly-diagnosed/parent-tips-explaining-autism-using-everyday-examples/](https://pathfindersforautism.org/articles/newly-diagnosed/parent-tips-explaining-autism-using-everyday-examples/).

4. **It's ok to say no.** You really don't have to attend every event and party you are invited to. Really.

5. Worried that your child might tell a friend or relative that they don't like their gift? Tact might not be our children's greatest strength. **Try role playing** with them. Pick the ugliest item in your house and practice how your child should react. It could be fun.

6. Stores are loud, bright, and people want to spray you with perfume. You can avoid all of that! **EVERYTHING can be purchased from your keyboard.** Online shopping also helps you avoid stalking shoppers for their parking spots.

7. The holidays offer the perfect opportunity to **teach your child how to go out and do things for other people.** Let your child deliver meals with you, or shop for a toy to donate to Toys for Tots, or let them pick out their gently used toys or clothes that they are willing to donate to a charitable organization. (Be warned, they can change their minds!)

8. Holidays are noisy. Loud people, ripping paper, the holiday music... You may want to **invest in a good set of noise canceling head phones** for your child.

9. **Find a sensory-friendly Santa** for your child's visit with the big guy. [pathfindersforautism.org/sensory-friendly-santas/](https://pathfindersforautism.org/sensory-friendly-santas/)

10. **Have an escape plan.** You know how to recognize your child's signs of frustration, or indications they are simply done. Map out ahead of time a quiet room, or a way to simply leave the premises.



11. **Make holiday decorations out of edible playdough.** Playdough makes for a great sensory activity and artistic expression. What better way to personalize your home than with your own handmade ornaments?

12. **Donate your autism-friendly toys or sensory toys to your local schools** once you no longer have a need for them. Or, start a toy exchange with other local families.

13. **Take time for YOU.** While you're at the toy store stocking up on batteries, remind yourself to recharge your own batteries. You'll be a better caregiver and advocate for your autistic family member if you're feeling rested, healthy and energized.

### Additional Resources

PFA Tips: Let It Go, Let It Go, Let It Go  
[pathfindersforautism.org/articles/seasonal/parent-tips-let-it-go-let-it-go-let-it-go/](https://pathfindersforautism.org/articles/seasonal/parent-tips-let-it-go-let-it-go-let-it-go/)

Cup of Caring - Sensory Friendly Holidays (video)  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZL\\_XsMBllmc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZL_XsMBllmc)

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