

PFA Tips

Let It Go, Let It Go, Let It Go

The loud Christmas music at every store, kids screaming, “Buy me a toy!!!!”, salespeople assaulting you with perfume sprayed in your eyes, the zombie look of postal employees, and of course when one light goes out they ALL go out. Yes, it must be the holidays. (I can’t help but wonder – is this how our kids on the autism spectrum feel EVERY DAY?) With the perceived pressure that we must accomplish a year’s worth of work in less than a month, we’re stressed. And whether they can articulate it or not, our kids are hypersensitive to our feelings – so they feel our stress magnified. And that’s not fun for anyone. So how do we bring the stress level down? Give yourself permission to **let it go**.

Broken cookies taste the same

We buy the magazines with photos of beautifully set tables so we can replicate that magical dinner in our own home. Setting an unattainable expectation to make everything just perfect can add stress and create disappointment. So take the pressure off and keep it simple. My son would be just as happy if I served pizza on a paper plate. Your kids won’t remember the table setting or the dinner – they will remember being together and their holiday will be filled with happy memories that will last a lifetime.

Stop surviving the holidays

Don’t just survive the holidays. I’ve never enjoyed anything I just survived. You never hear someone who survived a plane crash say, “I really enjoyed that crash.” Make a list of the holiday things you enjoy and make them your priority, and let the rest go.

I can always find a space in my driveway

Driving .2 mph, I followed a man to his car in the parking lot, much the same way I imagine the wise men followed the star to their promised spot. From there I walked three miles to the mall. If the very thought of parking and facing crowds raises your blood pressure, don’t go. Order online, make a gift, or better yet, just offer your time to someone. Unless of course that someone wants you to take them to the mall.

Leave the quest of the coveted arc to Indiana Jones

Was there that “perfect” gift I didn’t get for Christmas when I was a kid? I don’t know – honestly, I don’t remember. But if I didn’t, I’m certainly not in therapy over it now. Neither are you. And our kids won’t be either if that Xbox isn’t under the tree. Still not convinced? Go look in your kids’ closets and toy boxes and count how many previous “perfect” gifts are now forgotten.

Get your own elves

If someone offers to help – whether it’s cooking part of the meal, picking up something at the store, or watching your kids – say “yes”. Let’s practice that together – YES. Doing something helpful may be someone’s gift to you. Do not ask for a gift receipt, do not attempt to give this present back. Graciously accept.

Do one thing, do it well

Our To-Do lists are dizzying. Make a goal to accomplish just one or two things each day. Then celebrate after each goal is met. It’s perfectly acceptable to list “get out of bed” as a goal.

It’s all in how you budget

The holidays are a race to see which is depleted first; our sanity or our money. Come January, you’re going to realize you need both to get through the year.

**Tell Santa what YOU want**

Dismiss the myth that the holidays are for everyone but you. I would actually argue that we need a break more than our kids do. Take a bath, sip some _____ (insert beverage of your choice here), or just stare at the TV and eat M&Ms. Do something that makes YOU feel relaxed and happy. Refresh and recharge. Selfishness is not necessarily a bad quality. Without selfish moments, you lose yourself in the disability. Your child doesn’t want that anymore than you do.

Read more holiday tips at

<https://pathfindersforautism.org/articles/seasonal/holiday-tips/>

PFA Tips: Is Santa Real? Ummm....We Need to Talk <https://pathfindersforautism.org/articles/seasonal/parent-tips-is-santa-real-ummm-we-need-to-talk/>

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