

JANUARY 2024

CURRENT EVENTS AND UPDATES

- This month's newsletter will be highlighting Winter break tips and activities
- Coming soon to a clinic near you - Snowflake Tree. Let us know what is unique about you.
- Happy New Year
- Exciting things are happening at Tots to Teens! Check us out on Facebook and Instagram to stay connected.



Winter Sensory Activities and Ideas

Sensory play is something that all kids like to engage in, here are several tips to get the most out of this winter

- **If your child prefers to stay indoors**, have a special container of new and fun things to do just on snow days. This special, plastic storage container might include movies, music, books, and toys that are used only on bad weather days. You might even include special snacks or treats as well. Make sure that the container's items and activities are only used on days when the schedule changes abruptly. Take out only one item at a time to avoid over-stimulation.
- **For kids with sensory systems that don't mind the cold temperatures** and the extra layers of clothing, go out and play in the snow (weather permitting). Snow play has an endless list of activities. With fellow neighborhood kids out playing too, social skills can be practiced and developed as well. Sledding is not only physically challenging by pulling a sled while trudging up a snowy hill helps to work on balance and coordination. This is an OT exercise in disguise! For younger children, practice counting snowballs, then work on gross motor skills by stomping on the snowballs. And who can forget making snow angels? Make a whole angel family and practice identifying emotions by finger drawing different facial expressions.
- **Routines and schedules are the mantra** for those with autism and their families. In fact, they are so important to a child on the spectrum, any change in their daily habits can cause much anxiety or stress.
- **Talk about the possibility of school closing before it happens.** As soon as it looks like a bad weather closing is a possibility, begin to talk with your child. Talk up the fun activities that can be done instead of going to school. When the actual snow day occurs, knowing that alternative activities exist will most likely keep your child's anxieties to a minimum.



Winter Activities

- **Frozen treasure hunt** - This activity requires a little prep, but has the potential to keep your child busy for a while. In advance, fill a plastic bin with water. Place seasonal items into the water, such as cranberries, pine tree clippings, pinecones, plastic snowflakes and/or small holiday toys that won't be harmed by water or ice. Set the dish in the freezer overnight to create a large ice block. Once ready to play, take it out of the freezer and run some warm water over the bottom to loosen the ice before popping it out into a larger plastic bin or durable baking dish. Give your child tools like eye droppers, turkey basters, medicine syringes, spoons and toy hammers to use to try to "dig" for their finds in the ice. To switch it up, you can also give them dolls and animals to "skate" across the ice, or offer some salt to pour on for a mini science experiment.
- **Fake snow** - Baking soda and hair conditioner - that's it! Combine 2 ½ cups of pure baking soda with ½ cup of conditioner in a bowl. Add more baking soda if you don't want it to be as wet. Mold it into snowballs or make a mini snowman. Fairly foolproof. A little messy and a lot of fun. Can also bring in some holiday toys or arctic animals like polar bears and penguins. Have some trucks on hand? Use them as snow plows! Wash hands when finished and watch the kids closely to make sure they don't rub their eyes. You can also store this in a baggy for up to five days.
- **Make snowflakes** - Using coffee filters, create paper snowflakes. Fold them in fourths and cut small shapes from the folds to make snowflakes. Drizzle on glue and sprinkle with glitter for a sparkly effect. Once dry, use scotch tape to hang on windows and around the room. You can also make edible snowflakes by folding flour tortillas in fourths and then using scissors to cut shapes out of the folds, just like when you cut a paper snowflake. Brush with melted butter, sprinkle on some cinnamon sugar and bake at 350 degrees until crispy.
- **Winter squish bags** - Start with a sealable plastic bag. Gallon bags work best for this, though smaller sizes will still do. Draw on your winter or holiday design, then fill it with a bit of hair gel and items like pom poms, plastic snowflakes, googly eyes, buttons, glitter or dry beans that kids can use to push around the bag to bring it to life. Once finished filling the bag, make sure to let the air out and seal it at the top with tape so nothing can escape. As an added perk, these bags are great for keeping kids busy in the car on road trips!





- **Snowman fill** - Start with a large clear container. Used juice bottles or large jars work well (if you're not scared of glass). Use permanent markers to draw a snowman on the outside. Give it to your child with a bunch of cotton balls and encourage them to fill the container with as many or as little as they'd like. Want to make it a bit more challenging? Bring out spoons and tongs and have your kiddo practice filling while using these new tools.
- **Ice cube transfer** - Have two large plastic bins or baking pans available. Fill one with water and a touch of food coloring and the other with all the ice cubes you can fit. Encourage your child to scoop the ice cubes from one bin to the other using a range of spoons, cups and tongs. They can also stir them around in the water to make their own "potions."
- **Toys in a bag game** - Give everyone a bag (adults included!) and go into your room and put 5 things in the bag. Come back together and describe what is in the bag and see if the others can guess what it is. Or for a simpler game, pull each item out and label it. Little ones love pulling things out of bags and showing them to others is a good skill to work on in itself!

Here are some links - For more fun winter activity ideas-

- <https://www.autismadventures.com/winter-sensory-fun/>
- <https://www.andnextcomesl.com/p/winter-activities-for-kids.html>
- <https://www.angelsense.com/blog/5-winter-activities-for-kids-with-special-needs/>

Christina's
Corner

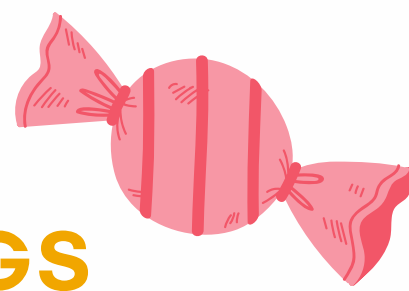
Tots Families!

Please remember to let Christina W,
accounts@totstoteenstherapy.com
know if your insurance has changed. Failure to notify us of these changes can result in unexpected charge.

Thank you!



Tots to Teens
therapy services



DECEMBER HAPPENINGS

Highlights from our events in December

Thank you for your participation in Candyland! Tots to Teens transformed the clinic into a winter wonderland and we hope all our kiddos enjoyed the event.

