

Autism Parenting Magazine

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MAKING FAMILY MEMORIES WITH CRAFTS

TOP 10 MUSICAL TOYS FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

12 TIPS TO CONSIDER WHEN TRAVELING THIS SEASON

HELP: MY CHILD CAME HOME WITH BITEMARKS



12 JOYFUL MOMENTS FROM 2014

A SEASON OF PEACE

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Dear Readers,

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas. Everywhere you go...

The excitement has begun. From crowded stores with festive music and lights to jam-packed streets, the very preparation for the holidays can be overwhelming. If you can find a way to prevent it all from becoming too demanding for your family, there can be a real sense of seasonal peace.

As a parent, it can be challenging to find that balance between trying to make everyone happy while living up to the often unrealistic expectations we tend to have for the holidays. Sometimes it all goes smoothly - and as we all know, sometimes it doesn't. That's why it's vital to step back, early in the season, and decide how you are going to approach the stress - how you are going to handle the strain. As parents, we tend to set the mood, so it's especially important to keep our behaviors in check as best we can.

I say this because, as Editor-in-Chief of *Autism Parenting Magazine*, I have sensed an unusual amount of hostility on the Internet recently. I am part of several social media groups centered on autism as I like to keep up-to-date on the challenges families face so we can offer the best advice in our magazine. It's rewarding, too, to watch people who have never met share their wisdom, and if needed, offer emotional support. These sites typically create camaraderie within the autism community - they provide a sense of belonging.

Recently, however, I have sensed a lot of antagonism on several of these sites. Strangers have been quick to judge and criticize when someone desperate asks for advice. A single mom reaches out, for example, because she lost her job and is at her breaking point. Or a family has been (unlawfully) kicked out of their apartment because their child on the spectrum was deemed somehow "disruptive." While some people offer kind advice, provide phone numbers for therapy and attorneys who might work pro bono, there has been an unusually high number of responders who instead chose to criticize and shame. And I wonder, is this necessary? It's not what a support group is all about.

As we planned stories for our holiday issue, I couldn't stop thinking about the importance of working together as one big family toward peace, cohesion and spreading autism awareness. We need to be there for one another, even when the chips are down and life seems most demanding.

That's why I am especially delighted with our selection of articles for December. We are thrilled to include Dawn Potter's piece, for example, called, "5 Tips for Helping the Entire Family Relax During the Holidays." In her article, Dawn shares excellent advice for families to create a calmer atmosphere through setting parameters and scheduling much-needed downtime. Lisa Timms also offers some excellent advice for families in her article, "Is This the Right Time?" by providing some ideas for working with your child to find a balance and maintain patience throughout the season.

We are happy to share the expertise of Sophie Durocher-Noel, an occupational therapist (OT), who has provided an



informative article called, "The Remarkable Results of Qi-gong Massage." Sophie has achieved dramatic success as an OT using a set of 12 movements based on traditional Chinese medicine to improve the overall blood and energy circulation of children on the spectrum. We also have included the positive testimonial by Suzanne Blanchard, a mother of a five-year-old who has made great strides after participating in this type of massage.

Heading to the mall or toy store during the height of the season can be stressful, so we have included some excellent ideas for choosing appropriate gifts for an autistic child. Music therapist John Mews has provided us with an extensive list of ideal toys in his article, "Giving the Gift of Music - Top 10 Therapeutically-Beneficial Musical Toys." Each one is colorful and inspirational - bound to bring some holiday fun.

In addition to giving gifts, it's also important to spend quality time at home with the family during the holidays. That's why we are thrilled to share the article, "Making Memories - Family-Friendly Craft Ideas," composed by two teachers, Tracy Oxley and Debra Henken-Strigaro. The three special holiday projects featured not only utilize fine motor skills, sequencing, social interaction, communication skills and creativity, they potentially can help bring families closer together during the season.

For those of you traveling with a child on the spectrum this season, Jessica Campbell has provided some excellent tips in "Airports and Travelling - A Dozen Things to Remember."

And finally, in celebration of the end of 2014, we have put together a list of highlights that brought some much-needed positivity and autism awareness during the year in "12 Joyful Moments from 2014 - A Year in Review." From small-town news to international news - positive stories always spark hope.

Wishing our readers a joyful holiday season and peace in the New Year.

Kind regards,
Amy KD Tobik

Disclaimer:

Autism Parenting Magazine tries its best to deliver honest, unbiased reviews, resources, and advice but please note that due to the variety of capabilities of people on the spectrum that these are recommendations and are not guaranteed by Autism Parenting Magazine or its writers.

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Author: Elouise Robinson, Autism Food Club

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Is This the Right Time?

By Lisa Timms, MS Special Education

Well it's that time of year again... the holidays. This is the month when you get to spend time with your family and friends; the time for parties and travel; the time for peace, love and joy. It's also the time for cleaning, shopping, cooking, planning, visitors and STRESS!

The holidays tend to bring out the best and worst of us. It's hard to remain calm when you're literally doing five things at once. You have family coming over, you're cooking, baking, the phone is ringing, someone showed up early, you're trying to maintain peace in the house and your child approaches you and looks at you with those loving eyes and asks if you would play a game with them RIGHT NOW. You don't want to snap but the timing couldn't be worse and you answer "NO!" harshly and regret it a moment later while your child runs away crying.

Our children don't understand the stress of this time of year. They think of time off of



school, being with their friends, and presents. They don't comprehend that you may be extremely busy and this is just not the right time to interrupt you.

Before things get crazy, sit down and have a talk with your child. You can explain to them that all of us at one time or another has been interrupted at a bad time. Whether we were right in the middle of a great movie and the phone rang; we were trying to do homework and someone was trying to talk about something totally unrelated; or we were trying to finish eating and someone showed up at the door. It happens. Ask your child to think about how he/she felt when interrupted. Was he/she happy about it? Explain that when other people are busy that it might not be the right time to ask them to do something. Remind your child to take into consideration what is going on at the time and then decide whether or not it's the best time to interrupt.

Every parent has been interrupted at the absolute worst time possible. Try to be patient with your child when this happens. Possibly create pin to wear, tie a belt around your waist or wear a certain hat to let your child know when it is not an appropriate time to interrupt.

Also, make sure you stress that if it's an emergency, ANYTIME is a good time!"

Lisa Timms, MS Special Education
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Lisa Timms has a Master of Science Degree from the University of Scranton. She is the author of "60 Social Situations and Discussion Starters" published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers. You can find her book online at: <http://www.jkp.com/catalogue/book/9781849058629>. She is also the creator of The Timms Social Skills Program. A live, fun, interactive, peer-to-peer online social skills program, which is offered internationally for students ages 6-18+ with Autism, Aspergers, ADHD and/or related disabilities or atypical students who may be struggling with their problem solving and/or social skills.



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