



Helpful approaches for a PDA profile of autism at Christmas

Christmas can be an overwhelming time for autistic people. We've put together some general suggestions of helpful approaches for PDA families & individuals.

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Perspective & Preparation

- ~ Try not to let tradition or pressure from others determine your plans
- ~ Redesign Christmas to work for your household
- ~ Plan collaboratively with flexibility for plans to change as needed
- ~ Incorporate lots of downtime and where possible continue usual routines and activities



Events & Gatherings

- ~ Keep small, short & spaced out
- ~ Make safe spaces & sensory support available
- ~ Agree exit options



Festivities & Decorations

- ~ Make the most of opportunities when they arise rather than at specific times and accept that some things can't be done



- Gifts** ~ Make & share a wish list of gift ideas & delivery preferences e.g. stocking not in bedroom* or gifts placed somewhere rather than physically handed over
- ~ Reduce uncertainty & overload e.g. say what gifts are coming, wrap in one parcel/clear cellophane or don't wrap, open gifts at a comfortable pace
 - ~ Consider giving one or more gifts early if waiting causes anxiety
 - ~ Reduce expectations around saying thank you for gifts



*inform Santa too

Food

- ~ Put less focus on Christmas dinner
- ~ Offer choice around where, when and what to eat
- ~ Make familiar/preferred foods available



Traditions

- ~ Traditions can feel like demands
- ~ Creating your own family's routines, Christmas-themed or otherwise and with room for flexibility, can be helpful



Recognising & Reducing Anxiety

- ~ Be aware of anxiety cues - it may not always 'look like' anxiety
- ~ Sudden emotional changes can occur more frequently when anxiety is high
- ~ Humour, rest & taking a break from Christmas-themed activities can be helpful
- ~ Keep calm & try not to take anything personally
- ~ Be aware of masking and how this affects anxiety later on
- ~ Build in lots of recovery time and personalised regulating/calming activities