

Adding Fun to the Fundamentals of the Holidays

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Doesn't everyone love the holidays?



The background is a solid blue color with a repeating pattern of white, stylized evergreen tree branches. The branches are arranged in a grid-like fashion, with some appearing more prominent than others. The overall effect is a clean, modern, and festive aesthetic.

Holiday Hassles

The image features a soft, blue-tinted background of a winter forest. The trees are covered in snow, and the overall atmosphere is calm and serene. The word "Time" is written in a clean, white, sans-serif font, positioned on the left side of the image. A solid blue vertical bar is visible on the far left edge.

Time



MERRY CHRISTMAS.

December

1  Candy Cane Moon Dough	2  Christmas Light	3  Santa Cup Games	4  Pipe Cleaner Christmas Tree	5  Christmas Button Wreath Craft	6  Felt Christmas Tree Math	7  Christmas Lights Fine Motor Play
8  Magnetic Christmas Trees	9  Scented Salt Dough	10  Jingle Bell Math Game	11  Scrap Ribbon Tree Ornaments	12  Christmas Salt Sculptures	13  Candy Cane Sensory Bin	14  Gingerbread Sensory Painting
15  Tree Fine Motor Counting	16  Threading with Jingle Bells	17  Shaving Cream	18  Christmas Tree Suncatchers	19  Egg Carton Tree Math Puzzle	20  Silver & Gold Sensory Play	21  Jingle Bell Color Sort
22  Candy Cane Play Dough	23  Name Practice Christmas Trees	24  Santa & Reindeer Print Craft	25  Reindeer Christmas Snack	26  Build a Snowman Light Table Play	27  Recycled Snowman Craft	28  Build a Snowman Foam Dough
29  Snowy Paper Bag Tree Craft	30  Sugar Cookie Cloud Dough	31  Antarctic Small World				

Click on the photos to get the full instructions for each activity or craft.

Time

- › Changes in schedule
- › Unstructured time
- › Unanticipated events
- › Waiting

Responses

- › Use a countdown device...ornament, calendar
- › Use visual schedules
- › Keep things on as much of a routine as possible
- › Inform of changes



The image features a soft, blue-tinted background of a snow-covered evergreen tree. The branches are heavily laden with snow, creating a delicate, white pattern against the blue sky. The overall mood is serene and wintry. The word "Lights" is written in a clean, white, sans-serif font, positioned on the left side of the image, partially overlapping the tree's branches.

Lights



Lights

- › Changes in the environment
- › Too bright
- › Flashing lights can trigger seizures
- › Lights in unexpected places



Response

- › Be cautious of lights
- › Include the child in changes in environment
- › Change a few things at a time
- › Choose lighting together





Candles

- › Scents
- › Flickering flames
- › Hazards to kids who like fire



Responses

- › Use unscented candles
- › Use flameless candles
- › Put candles out of reach
- › Or skip them altogether



A blue-tinted photograph of a snowy evergreen forest. The trees are covered in snow, and the overall scene is serene and wintry. The text "Religious Services" is overlaid in white, centered horizontally and slightly below the vertical center.

Religious Services

Religious Services

- › May be out of routine
- › Sensory overload- music, smells, crowds
- › Holiday programs, pageants



Response

- › Clarify expectations in advance
- › Social stories can help
- › Plan for sensory issues
- › Talk with faith leaders
- › Offer alternatives
- › Have an escape if needed

A blue-tinted photograph of a snowy evergreen forest. The trees are heavily laden with snow, and the background is a soft, out-of-focus white. The word "Presents" is overlaid in white, sans-serif font on the left side of the image.

Presents



The problem with presents....

- › Executive functioning
- › Patience
- › Need to know
- › Doesn't do well with surprises
- › Embarrassment
- › Blunt responses
- › May have trouble sharing/giving



Why Sheldon Doesn't Like Presents

- › <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H7xw-oDjwXQ>
- › <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=itMfQB2z29E>
- › <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zebw1O2DJjE>

Responses

- › Don't put presents out
- › Don't tease about presents
- › Give a few presents ahead of time
- › Allow different schedule to open presents
- › Script responses to receiving gifts
- › Social stories
- › Redirect obsessive behaviors
- › Choose own gifts, or create a desired list

The image features a blue-tinted background of a snowy evergreen forest. The trees are covered in snow, and the overall scene is soft and wintry. The word "Food" is written in a clean, white, sans-serif font, positioned on the left side of the image. A solid blue vertical bar is visible on the far left edge.

Food



Food

- › Smells and tastes
- › Sounds
- › Crowds
- › Other stereotyped issues (food touching)
- › Special dietary needs
- › Too much sugar
- › Changes in preparation



Responses

- › Respect likes and dislikes
- › Keep foods as much the same as you can
- › Allow them to eat separately
- › Respect dietary needs
- › Bring own favorites to share
- › Or bring own special meal





Elf on the Shelf



Elf on the Shelf

- › It's creepy
- › It adds to anxiety
- › Lots of work for parents/caregivers

Response:

› Don't do it





Relatives and other humans



The problem with relatives and other interlopers

- › Expected to touch
- › Expected to share
- › Crowds
- › Extra noise
- › Misunderstanding and advice abound
- › Judgment on parenting
- › Inconsistent responses
- › Schedules and living arrangements change
- › Less personal space



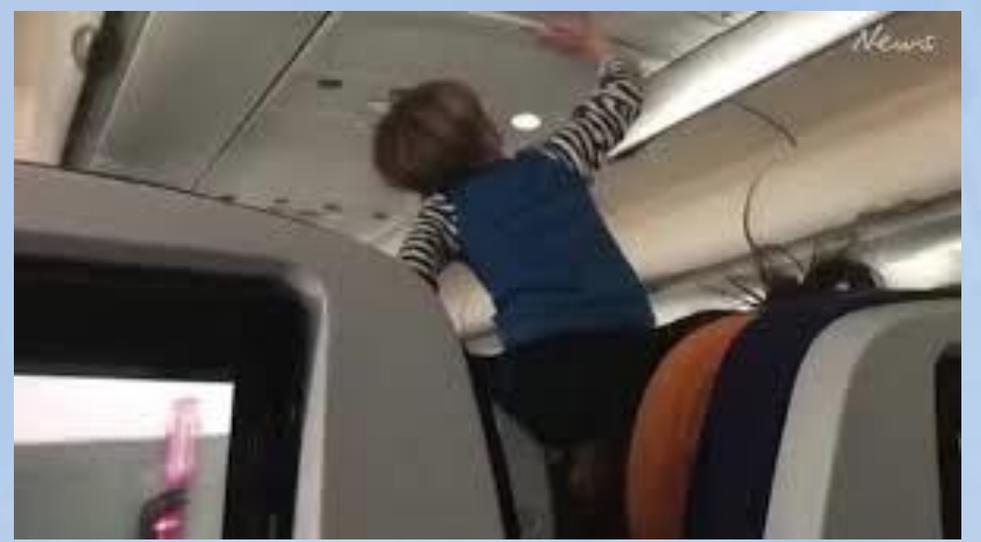
Responses

- › Educate people
- › Let them know the plan ahead of time
- › Keep structure as much as possible
- › Respect the boundaries
- › Put together a photo album of who's coming or where you are going; who will be there
- › Have an escape plan
- › Limit time if needed



The image features a monochromatic blue color scheme. The background is a soft-focus photograph of a winter forest, with evergreen trees heavily laden with snow. The lighting is diffused, creating a serene and cold atmosphere. In the lower-left quadrant, the word "Travel" is written in a clean, white, sans-serif font, standing out against the darker blue background.

Travel



Traveling

- › Sensory: too close, too loud, motion, confining, etc.
- › Changes in schedule and routine
- › Anticipation of arrival
- › Boredom
- › Everyone's on edge (especially in bad weather)
- › Decide which is better; relatives or a hotel

Responses

- › Pack a your-kid-friendly-bag full of their favorite video games, books, dinosaurs, Thomas the tank engine set, etc.; travel safely (winter survival kit)
- › Pre-teach; social stories
- › Consider snacks, meals and hydration along the way
- › Take breaks
- › Let them help plan the travel
- › Use a visual schedule and maps to show the way
- › Have down (quiet) time when you arrive
- › Address safety issues
- › www.projectlifesaver.org



The image features a blue-tinted background of a snowy evergreen forest. The trees are covered in snow, and the overall scene is soft and wintry. The word "Shopping" is written in a clean, white, sans-serif font, centered horizontally and slightly above the vertical center of the image. A solid blue vertical bar is visible on the far left edge of the frame.

Shopping



Shopping at Walmart

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IcS2VUoe12M>



Shopping (really?)

- › Sensory issues
- › Over stimulating
- › Executive skills challenged
- › Lines, waiting
- › Lack of personal space
- › Difficult to set end times
- › Music

Responses

- › Go during off times
- › Have a schedule and try to stick with it
- › No surprises or unexpected changes
- › Build in positive behavior supports
- › Give them something to do
- › Map out the store ahead of time
- › Let them stay home
- › Shop online together



Finding the fun....



Prioritize!

- › Ask your Aspie what their favorite holiday tradition/activity is and plan around that. This may help create focus on what is important and take stress off of “having to do everything”.



ALWAYS...

- › Have reasonable expectations...for the child, not what you want
- › Allow for plenty of “recharge” time
- › Start teaching ahead of time...weeks ahead unless your child does not do well with anticipatory anxiety
- › Praise all expected behaviors
- › Have a low sensory quiet area with favorite activities available
- › Take care of yourself
- › Attend parent support groups; talk to other parents/experts

- › Find new ways to celebrate that incorporate the special interests of the child.
 - Make Lego ornaments
 - Find holiday trivia (Santas around the world)
 - › Why do we feed Santa milk and cookies?
 - So he doesn't eat us (Finland)
 - www.stnicholascenter.org
 - Yes, there are unusual holiday movies....
 - › The Star Wars Holiday Special (1978)
 - › National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation (1989)
 - › Scrooged (1988)
 - › The Nightmare Before Christmas (1993)
 - › Many of the early 1900 films based on A Christmas Carol

- › Recognize the signs that your child is nearing a meltdown. Remove him from the situation BEFORE he explodes.
- › Do not stop stimming behaviors
- › Build distractions into the day along with extra sensory breaks
- › Make sure all electronics are charged
- › Double check the packing (make sure favorite items are packed)
- › **Always allow for an escape**

- › Pre-plan for all situations; what will you do if a meltdown happens?
- › You Tube “Parent to Parent” series for autism
- › Remember, it’s a holiday for everyone. We just may do different things to make it feel special.

Red River Valley Asperger Autism Network
www.rrvan.org

