



# Happy Holidays!

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## SELF CARE

Holidays can be tough as parents since we often try to make things perfect. Remind yourself this time of year—don't compare yourself (and your family) to others. Your child may need more structure or accommodation for holiday celebrations but you are still making special memories together!

More holiday strategies: <https://jodeekulp.wordpress.com/2014/11/24/101-holiday-strategies-for-fetal-alcohol-spectrum-disorders-supporting-yourself-and-your-family/>

The holidays can be particularly challenging for children with sensory processing difficulties. Think “sensory”:

**SOUND:** Try using headphones or earplugs in noisy environments. Shopping in malls can feel like an earthquake. Find spots in the mall that are quiet and have fewer decorations where you can have a retreat. Shop during quiet times when the lines are shortest and when your child has eaten and is rested.

**TOUCH:** Pretty new clothes can scratch, pull, tug, and itch; allow your child to choose clothing that is more comfortable for them. This website has some great options: <http://www.softclothing.net/>

For children with fine motor challenges, wrap gifts simply. All the tape and ribbons can be frustrating and by the time the gift is opened, they can be less appreciative. Gift bags may work better!

**SMELL:** Try using calming essential oils that the child loves such as lavender or cedar wood. For example, put a drop of the oil on a cotton ball and then place that in a Ziplock bag to smell.

**SIGHT:** Keep in mind that bright lights, colours, and busy stores may be overwhelming. Wearing sunglasses, a baseball cap, or a hoodie may be helpful.

**TASTE:** If your child has particular food preferences (or strong dislikes), offer to bring some of their favourites to the party!

## Holiday Parties

- Make a plan to take a break from overwhelming sensory and social situations. Ask your host if there is a room that your child can use to relax and calm down.
- Have a go-to bag with things to occupy and calm your child such as playdough, books with lots of pictures, a beloved stuffed toy or blanket, video games, or an I-pad.
- Before attending a party, a good strategy would be to role-play and practise the rules of being a guest. Remember to be concrete and specific.
- Children living with FASD can sometimes be brutally honest. Social stories on the proper ways of receiving gifts may be helpful to avoid potential misunderstanding (e.g. receiving a gift or eating food that they don't like).
- You do not have to apologize for doing what is appropriate for your family.
- **Keep it simple!** What you really want is to create wonderful Christmas memories.