

ATN WOULD LIKE TO WISH
EVERYONE A FESTIVE HOLIDAY
SEASON AND A VERY
HAPPY NEW YEAR

How to Help Your Child with LD Have a Happy Holiday

The holiday season is a time for family togetherness, community, and friendship when we enjoy parties and fun celebrations. Unfortunately, children who struggle with social and behavioral problems can feel lonely and excluded during this happy time.

There are many ways, however, that you can make things easier for your child throughout the season, by helping him enjoy the holidays and feel beloved. This article provides 12 ideas designed to help your child with learning disabilities have a happy holiday and lessen stress on your family. Read these ideas and choose the ones that you think are the best fit for your child.

Help your child select or make unique gifts

Encourage your child to use his talents to create something special for friends and family. Many youngsters with learning disabilities have artistic and mechanical abilities. You might help him create an electronic greeting card on the computer, cook homemade cookies as a gift, or make items such as holiday decorations.

Prepare your child for events such as holiday parties

Tell children the schedule and what you expect him to do. Tell him details such as these:

- Guests will arrive between 2 and 3. I will greet them at the door. I need you to stay in the family room. The children will join you there and play.
- Most of the grown-ups will be in the living room, and most of the children will be in the family room. I will visit you occasionally and see how things are going. Come and get me if you need me.
- The meal will start about 6. I need you to help me in the kitchen around 5:30. We will get everything ready and ask people to come to the table and eat.

Teach your child the names of guests ahead of time if possible

Consider showing your child pictures of guests before the party, or reminding him of people he has met before. Teach him how people are related to each other (brother, sister, wife, husband, cousin, etc.).

Role-play scenarios with your child

You might want to teach your child to receive a gift graciously, look happy when she opens it, and thank the giver by name. Or you might want to practice greeting guests at the door.

Prepare relatives and guests for the possibility of unusual behavior by your child or actions that might be misinterpreted

If any of these things apply to your child, you might tell guests that he:

- Sometimes doesn't get jokes
- Won't understand a sarcastic tone of voice
- Will tend to take things very literally
- May talk without pause and not notice that someone wants to take a turn to speak



How to Help Your Child with LD Have a Happy Holiday (con't)

- Interrupts other people because he cannot tell when his conversational partner has finished speaking
- Dislikes being hugged, touched, or stroked
- Is clumsy and doesn't like being teased about it

If you feel comfortable doing so, give your guests some suggestions on how they might respond to these behaviors.

Consciously include your child with a learning disability in conversation and other activities

If your child does not know when to get her words into a conversation, keep an eye on her. Ask her opinion when she wants to talk. If she talks too much, interrupt her and guide the conversation to someone else. Give her a role in games. Invite her to participate in activities.

Plan to handle overstimulation

The crowds, loud noise, hustle, bustle, and confusion of holiday parties can cause some children to get overloaded with sensation. They can explode, "melt down" or "shut down." Make a plan with your child. Tell him that he can ask you for time to leave the party and be alone in an empty room in the house or go outside. You and other family members may decide to keep an eye on your child and take him on a walk or sit quietly with him if he seems to be overwhelmed.

Tactfully make accommodations for your child's difficulties

Examples:

- If a child has trouble reading before a group, ask the first few people who open gifts to avoid reading cards aloud. Hand your child his gift and say, "This is from Uncle John"
- If your child doesn't get jokes, explain the joke to her privately or while laughing with everyone else as an extension of what makes the joke funny

Give your child a role that helps her to shine

You might ask him to:

- Cook something for the meal
- Put one of her projects in the living room, such as a mechanical train set he put together or an interesting science fair project
- Put together toys and games after the gift is opened
- Organize a group for a game
- Make a table centerpiece or decorations for a room
- Hand out gifts or other items to each guest
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Thank the adults that guide your child

The holidays are a good time to express gratitude. Give your child's teachers a note thanking them specifically for how they help your child. If a neighbor, babysitter, youth club leader, or other professional has taken a particular interest in your child, let them know how important they are to your child's self-esteem and future growth. Help your child write a letter, give a gift, or make a special token of appreciation.

Read a holiday book to your child

Pick up a good holiday book and read it to your child for the sake of sharing the story. Let her hear the words and look at the pictures with no pressure to perform. Let her read if she wants, but if she makes mistakes, read the passage over correctly without being critical. If she gets curious, help her sound out words: but don't make her do it. Just enjoy your child and enjoy the book.

Ask your child to do good deeds and contribute to your community

The holiday season is a good time to ask your child to do service projects that help others. Your whole family could volunteer. Or you and another family member could try a new activity the first time and figure out the best way for your child to participate. Encourage children to follow up on their ideas that might help those who are less fortunate. These activities will help your child prepare for future careers and develop his self-esteem. Even more importantly, your child will learn that children with learning disabilities can make their communities better by sharing their unique abilities.

Reference: Dale S. Brown. (2008). Retrieved Online: November 17, 2016. <http://www.ldonline.org/article/11894/>

Gingerbread Cookies

The article above, "How to Help Your Child with LD Have a Happy Holiday" suggests that a fun holiday activity to do with your child is to bake homemade cookies as a gift. ATN thought it would be a nice treat to include a Gingerbread Cookie recipe the whole family could have fun making together.

Ingredients

Cookies

- 1 - Cup packed brown sugar
- 1/3 - Cup shortening
- 1 1/2 - Cups dark molasses
- 2/3 - Cup cold water
- 7 - Cups Gold Medal™ all-purpose flour
- 2 - Teaspoons baking soda
- 2 - Teaspoons ground ginger
- 1 - Teaspoon ground allspice
- 1 - Teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 - Teaspoon ground cloves
- 1/2 - Teaspoon salt

Frosting and Decorations

- 4 - Cups powdered sugar
- 1 - Teaspoon vanilla
- 4 - To 5 tablespoons half-and-half
- Food colors, if desired
- Raisins or chocolate chips, if desired
- Assorted candies, if desired

Directions

- 1 In large bowl, beat brown sugar, shortening, molasses and water with electric mixer on medium speed, or mix with spoon, until well blended. Stir in remaining ingredients. Cover and refrigerate at least 2 hours.
- 2 Heat oven to 350°F. Grease cookie sheet lightly with shortening or spray with cooking spray. On floured surface, roll dough 1/4 inch thick. Cut with floured gingerbread cutter or other shaped cutter. On cookie sheet, place cutouts about 2 inches apart.
- 3 Bake 10 to 12 minutes or until no indentation remains when touched. Immediately remove from cookie sheet to cooling rack. Cool completely, about 30 minutes.
- 4 In medium bowl, mix powdered sugar, vanilla and half-and-half until frosting is smooth and spreadable. Add food colors as desired. Frost cookies; decorate with raisins, chocolate chips and candies.

Reference: Betty Crocker. Retrieved Online: November 18, 2016. <http://www.bettycrocker.com/recipes/gingerbread-cookies/92eccbd8-33d2-4f05-a09e-ea6722d67786>

Inspirational Quotes – Issue # 63

Edited by: Rachel Smith

Throughout history, society has been influenced and shaped by the many great contributions made by individuals with learning disabilities. These people demonstrate the strength and perseverance to be true to themselves and strive for their full potential. We hope their words inspire and motivate you to reach for your true potential.

"When I'm focused, there is not one single thing, person, anything that can stand in the way of my doing something. There is not. If I want something bad enough, I feel I'm gonna get there."

—*No Limits: The Will to Succeed* - Michael Phelps, Olympic gold medalist (ADHD)

Diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) at age 9, swimmer Michael Phelps overcame the challenges of his condition and hit his stride in the pool - thanks, in large part, to his mother's help. Throughout his career he has won 28 medals—23 gold, three silver and two bronze,

Reference: Michael Phelps. Retrieved Online: November 17, 2016. <https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/personal-stories/famous-people/celebrity-quotes-learning-from-challenges#slide-9>

Volunteer Opportunities

MATH %

COMPUTERS

ENGLISH!

EMPLOYMENT

FUNDRAISING \$

Are you interested in helping to make a difference in someone's life? Do you have talents and skills that you would be willing to share? If so, being an ATN volunteer may be just for you!

ATN is looking for individuals that are willing to volunteer a few hours a week to help make a difference in someone's life.

Opportunities exist in our academic upgrading lab, assistive technology lab, employment services, class room assistance and drop-in computer lab.

For more information and to get involved, please call us at

519 - 433-7950 ext 372.
or visit our website at www.atn.on.ca



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We hope you have enjoyed this month's issue of the LD Edge Newsletter and that you are looking forward to the next issue.



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If we give them an edge...
They may give us one!