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### A Grandparent Guide For Happy Holidays

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*When you have a grandchild with autism, the holiday season can present some extra challenges for your family. With careful planning your family can make the holiday season warm and happy for everyone*



Sometimes families find it difficult to share holidays together because a child's autistic behavior is misunderstood. The parents of the child with autism may receive undeserved criticism from family members about their inability to control their child. There are many things you can do to prevent this from happening and to make the holidays more comfortable and supportive for your grandchild with autism and his parents.

Old holiday traditions may need to be modified to make family gatherings more inclusive. ***Begin now to prepare your home and family members.***

If you don't get to see your grandchild regularly, it is important to remember to **have realistic expectations**

for your time together. Before the visit, call your son or daughter to ask if there is anything to do or have on hand to make the visit more enjoyable for your grandchild. You can have favorite toys, food and videos ready and plan to go to places that they like to visit.

**Grandparents often express fear and anxiety about how to interact with their grandchildren.** You may feel rejected because you expect welcoming big hugs and kisses and may feel frustrated and unloved if that does not happen. Your grandchild may have sensory issues that make it overwhelming and even painful for them to be touched or hugged. They may not have the skills yet to know what to do or how to respond or they may just be learning these skills, but shut down around new people or in new situations. **The most important thing is to not take this personally. They are not rejecting you.** A high five or brief gaze may be all that they are currently capable of doing.

If you are planning a party or other special event ask your son or daughter if they feel your grandchild will be comfortable being present. You may want to change your **plan to be more inclusive and focus on creating new holiday traditions together.**

**Keep demands for social politeness at a low level.** Even if your grandchild has learned new social skills like greeting people by saying hello or shaking hands, don't anticipate that will happen when there is a lot of stimuli like lights, loud music and new people in new situations.

### **Pace yourself and be flexible**

If you have 3 events planned for a day, but there is a midday meltdown after event # 1, maybe it's best to skip the others. It is better to have one great time together that you can all remember fondly than to watch the rest of the day deteriorate into tantrums or other behavior problems. New situations, new people, and new schedules can be overwhelming for a child with autism. Your grandchild is not being willfully defiant or difficult, and your son or daughter does not have poor parenting skills. Too much input and too many changes can be very hard for children with autism to process. Let your son or daughter know you understand this may be responsible for meltdowns and negative behavior.

**Create outlets or escape routes.** Plan to have a place in your home that has a lower level of stimulation, lower lights or a comfy spot where your grandchild can "take a break" from all of the excitement. Rather than having to leave or end an event, either shortening the visit or having a place to go to take a break from it all may be all that your grandchild needs to get on to the next event.

**Manage sensory input.** The holiday season is filled with new experiences. Manage these to the best of your ability. If you are taking a trip to the mall, try to go at times when the mall is less busy, or make the trip shorter. The holidays might not be the best time to try new foods. Try to have something they like at every meal.

**Control Schedules.** Routines and knowing what is happening next is often very important to individuals on the spectrum. Holiday schedules deviate completely from our daily normal routines and this can be especially difficult for a child with autism. Ask your son or daughter how best to handle daily schedules. Some children with autism can be included in the schedule making and this is very empowering for them, other children might not have the ability to understand, but may be able to when given a visual schedule. Find out what works best and if an unexpected change is just about to happen, find out how best to communicate that change.

***Be sure to compliment your grandchild, son or daughter about the new abilities and progress your grandchild has achieved. Grandparents can be supportive good listeners who consistently give their families loving reinforcement at the holidays - and throughout the year.***

Visit GAN's website for some practical holiday tips. In addition to gift ideas, there are excellent suggestions shared by other grandparents, to ensure that everybody will enjoy the holidays.  
[Best Holiday Suggestions](#)

## HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE



Autism Gift Guide - Sensory Toys For Your Autistic Child



Autism Live Toy Review 2018

Find more tips on our website:

[Holiday Gift Resources for Special Kids](#)

[Gift Giving Tips and Gift Suggestions](#)

Here are Gift Certificates that you can print and use for holidays, milestone events or for *any day*.

[HolidayCertif](#)

[AnyDayCertif](#)

## HOLIDAY APPS FOR KIDS WITH AUTISM



[Chai on Chanukah](#)



[i Get... Christmas](#)



[Hanukkah Sliding](#)



[Christmas Radio+](#)



[Christmas Pets  
Coloring](#)



[Amazing Santa:  
Christmas Games](#)

## MERRY SENSORY CHRISTMAS

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### Christmas Cloud Dough Recipe



- 7 cups of flour
- 1/2 cup of green or red [powdered tempera paint](#) (you can make your own powdered paint)

- 1 cup of vegetable oil
- Peppermint extract

Combine the [powdered tempera paint](#) and flour. Add a few drops of peppermint extract. Pour in the oil and mix well. Mixing will take a few minutes. When done you will have an amazing substance known as cloud dough!

[MORE SENSORY RESOURCES ON PINTEREST](#)

## SPOOKTACULAR SUCCESS

### Fall Social Event 2018



**Our Fall Social hosted by Cal State Fullerton was our best Social ever! We had a total of 165 registered volunteers from 8 other colleges & universities and we hosted 154 guests for a record-breaking 319 people in attendance! [Check out our event photo gallery.](#)**

### eBay Donations: Make Room For Holiday Gifts!

#### Donate to GAN's [Giving Works eBay Store](#)

Grandparents have lots of "stuff" like collectibles, unused gifts and household goods, clothing, vintage jewelry and things in good condition that our families "do not want."

Your "stuff" can benefit other grandparents and families affected by autism. The Grandparent Autism Network welcomes donated goods.

You can drop off tax deductible items at Jay's Catering, 10581 Garden Grove Blvd., Garden Grove, CA - or send them C/O GAN at

23785 El Toro Road, #103, Lake  
Forest, CA 92630 (USPS flat rate boxes  
may lower mailing costs!)



**Grandparent Autism Network**  
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[www.ganinfo.org](http://www.ganinfo.org)  
[www.faninfo.org](http://www.faninfo.org)

**Networking together,  
grandparents are a vital  
resource for autism...  
and each other!**