

Sensory Issues and the Holidays

October 28th, 2008

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Categories: [Sensory Integration/Processing](#)

We are just starting two months of what can be a nightmare of parents of a child with sensory issues.

Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukah, and New Year's are filled with sensory issues. Bright lights, sounds, textures, colors, busy stores, and many other things can cause your child with sensory issues to have meltdowns or struggle this time of year.



There are holiday programs in schools and churches which can irritate a sensitive child's ears. Wearing fancier clothing for parties, or costumes for Halloween can be a nightmare. Factor in all the candy, well meaning relatives, holiday music or screeching sounds can push your child over the edge and cause you to want to run for cover.

How do you combat all of these and still manage to have successful holidays? Here are some tips.

- 1) **Earplugs or earmuffs** – As adults we can be over stimulated by all the noise of the holidays and to kids with sensory issues, it can be magnified. Have a supply of ear plugs handy that your child can quickly slip in when feeling overwhelmed. If ear plugs might be an irritant, try ear muffs or even a headset or MP3 player with soothing music.
- 2) **Having an escape plan** – Be prepared to head out of a situation if necessary. Simply finding a quiet corner to be able to allow your child to de-escalate may be all that is necessary. In other cases, you may need to leave and head home. Watch for warning signs that your child be getting over stimulated or have a code word that you and your child understand that it's time to leave. If your family or friends are understanding, warn them that you may need to leave or head to quiet area.
- 3) **Quiet time each day** – Try to work in some quiet time each day where your child knows there will not be sensory issues. If structure is important to your child, try to do it at the same time each day, or the same place so that your child knows there will be time that is free of all the sensory overload.
- 4) **Sunglasses** – Bright lights and colors can be overwhelming and can give anyone a headache. Your child may respond to sunglasses to help cut down on some of the intensity of the colors or lights. Even though Halloween has not yet come, we all know that there will be Christmas lights appearing everywhere very shortly. You will see them everywhere you go.

You know what your child's issues or triggers are. Try to come up with a plan to combat those before the holidays are in full swing so you are not scrambling to deal with issues when your child is escalating.