



# Winter Newsletter

Marcus  
AUTISM CENTER

NIH Autism Center  
of Excellence

Tom and Karen Chapman Care Coordination Services



## Reducing holiday stress

The holiday season is joyful for many, but for kids with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), it may also present challenges by disrupting their normal routines and environments. Planning and discussion can help ease the transition of being at home instead of school and handling new sights, sounds and places.

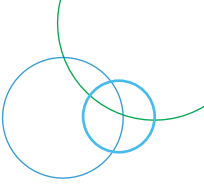
- As much as possible, try to stick to familiar routines; consider incorporating daily activities from your child's class, such as a daily calendar or reading time.
- Invite your child to participate in the decorating process as much as possible. Go over rules about not touching certain decorations or opening presents before the appropriate time.
- Create a visual schedule for your holiday activities, such as decorations, parties or visits, and gift opening.
- Holiday parties and outings can be noisy and overwhelming, so be sure to have noise-canceling headphones, favorite toys or books ready to help your child cope.
- Discuss your child's needs with relatives or party hosts in advance. When visiting, try to identify a quiet place in your host's home for your child if he needs to rest or be alone.

## Tips for holiday travel

As always, discuss your travel plans and what your family will be doing and when. Begin to prepare your child early, so you have more time to discuss events and work through concerns. If this will be your child's first long car trip, try some shorter practice trips before you go. If possible, visit the airport or train station ahead of time so your child can get used to the crowds, sights and sounds.

Make sure you have your child's favorite toys, books, snacks and electronics available, as well as headphones. If you will be flying, keep in mind that there will be periods of time when electronics cannot be used. Plan ahead for snacks, meals, and bathroom or other necessary breaks. You can create a list of trip rules and rewards for positive behaviors. Make a visual map or story of your trip; this way you can help your child prepare for the journey and remind him of who you are visiting and what will happen while you're there.





## Communicating with teachers

Teachers are a huge part of your child's life and an important part of his development process, so having open communication with them is vital. Discuss scheduling regular communications, such as emails, written notes, phone calls and in-person meetings. A routine exchange of goals, methods, progress and concerns about your child will help you and the teacher form an effective partnership to help your child succeed.

Before a meeting, think through what you know about your child's time at school and be specific with your questions. Ask about your child's favorite subjects, current behavior or trouble areas, and interaction with classmates. If problems are occurring, work with the teacher to figure out what could be triggering them and share what has worked for you in the past. Find out what positive reinforcements are working well at school, then share and compare what you do at home. With you and the teacher working together to provide consistent expectations, your child will continue to have opportunities to grow and succeed at school.

## We need research volunteers

At Marcus Autism Center, we're committed to providing the best possible care for kids living with ASD now and transforming the future of ASD through research. Because of our mission, we are always looking for study participants.

Visit [marcus.org/research](http://marcus.org/research) or call **404-785-7600** to learn more about our research program.

## Upcoming events at Marcus Autism Center

Visit [marcus.org](http://marcus.org) for more information about parent workshops, family activities and community events.



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