



HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Behavior Strategies and Ideas for school breaks
Virtual Parent Group & Training
December 2020

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Home for the Holidays

Behavior Strategies and Ideas for School Breaks

During today's parent training you will learn:

- How to provide structure to each school break day
- When and how to give choices at home
- How to calm down your upset, anxious or agitated child
- How to manage your own stress
- Fun ideas for the whole family to plan throughout the week
- Some of our favorite gift ideas

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Home for the Holidays: Behavior strategies: Clear expectations

- Create a structure to each day
 - Do your best to keep as close to a regular wake up and sleep schedule
 - Make an AM/PM schedule and post it where your child will see it (bedroom door, refrigerator)
 - Use "anchors" like getting dressed, breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks, getting ready for bed to structure the day, Check them off as the day progresses
 - Plan special activities (theme nights)

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Home for the Holidays: Behavior strategies: Clear expectations

- Each morning review the day of the week, date and month
- Use a wall calendar to highlight special events like Christmas Day or any fun activities that you plan.
 - Use a neutral symbol like a 'star' for special activities
 - The neutral symbol allows for the activity to change as needed
- If you child has a phone or tablet, use the calendar function to schedule special activities
 - You can also use this function as a signal for activities like getting ready for bed
- Have your child check or cross out each day of the vacation as a count down to going back to school
 - This makes a good bedtime routine

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Home for the Holidays: Behavior strategies: Clear Expectations

- Make directions and expectations clear
- Be sure you have your child's attention before asking or telling them something
 - Make sure they can see and hear you!
- Tell your child what needs to be done or what is going to happen
 - Use clear, concise language
 - Use visuals: first/then
 - If your child is a reader, write a list or a short note
- Avoid giving directions in the form of a question, as this permits your child to say NO which may create a power struggle
- Unless NO is an acceptable response, tell, don't ask
 - Example: Time to get your pj's on
 - Non-example: Can you go upstairs and get your pj's on

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Home for the Holidays: Behavior strategies: Providing Choices

- Choices are powerful as making a choice gives a sense of control
 - It reduces anxiety, increases motivation and engagement
- Most of us want to make our own decisions and not have someone make them for us
 - I.e., After dinner, what do I want to do first; fold laundry or do the dishes. How would you feel if you did not have the option to choose
- Give choices in the context of daily activities prior to refusal or non-compliance
 - Not the same as a choice board
 - Give prior to starting a task or demand

Adapted from The Autism Helper Podcast

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Home for the Holidays: Behavior strategies: Providing Choices

- Use clear, quick, easy language
 - 2 options are best
- Avoid open ended questions
 - Non-example: What do you want to eat for dinner?
 - Example: Do you want pizza or chicken nuggets?
- Both options should result in the same outcome that you intend. Choices should be a win/win for everyone

Adapted from The Autism Helper Podcast

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Home for the Holidays: Behavior strategies: Providing Choices

- Choices are endless; just keep your eye on the prize and identify what the goal is, then identify the choice within the task or activity
- Everything can be made into a choice. Just remember what the goal is, what you want your child to do.
- Use directional choices when you do not have tangibles (right or left, here or there, up or down)
- Create momentum as a starting point; who should do the first one me or you, who should get the pj's mom or dad
- When you don't have much to offer in any given moment, you will need to be creative and find something, ask yourself what can I offer?

Adapted from The Autism Helper Podcast

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Home for the Holidays: Behavior strategies: Providing Choices a real life example

You need to go to the supermarket

- Non-example: Do you want to go to the food store or park? This choice does not help you get your food shopping done
- Example: We are going food shopping; do you want to push the cart or hold the shopping list?
 - This tells the child, food shopping is going to happen, but he/she will have a say in how it goes.

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Home for the Holidays: Behavior strategies: Providing Choices a real life example

Steps of the Activity

1. Picks up toothbrush
2. Gets toothbrush wet
3. Puts toothpaste on brush
4. Begins brushing teeth

Choice Options within this activity

- Would you like to use the purple or the blue toothbrush?
- Would you like to use warm or cold water?
- Would you like to use spearmint or bubblegum flavored toothpaste?
- Would you like to stand on the floor or on the stool?

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Home for the Holidays: Behavior strategies: Providing Choices FAQ's

- How should my child communicate his/her choice?
- How many choices should I offer?
- What happens if my child chooses something other than what is offered?
- When I give a choice, does that mean I am giving in?
- Why does giving a choice or option work?

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Home for the Holidays: Behavior strategies: Stimulus Cues

- Use visual cues like STOP AND GO (red and green paper) to indicate when something is or is not available
 - Rooms in the house
 - Electronics
 - Attention from people
- Alarms and notifications
 - Change the sound of the wake-up alarm
 - Use a timer
 - Schedule transitions or activities into the phone or tablet and set a notification
 - This can also be used to remind your child to stop what he/she is doing to use the bathroom



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Home for the Holidays: Behavior strategies: Keep calm & co-regulate

- When kids are anxious or stressed, it is NOT the time for problem solving or rationale thinking
 - Brain is not online for this purpose
 - Brain is in flight or flight
- Co-regulation: shared state of calmness
 - When caregivers come to distress, upset or escalating behavior with calm, it reduces the stress reaction
 - There is no faster way to calm your child down then to bring calm to the situation
 - An escalated adult simply can not de-escalate an escalated child
 - Bring calm to the chaos

From The Thriving School Psychologist

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Home for the Holidays: Behavior strategies: Keep calm & co-regulate

- BREATHE!!
 - In front of your child, simply
 - Take a deep breath in
 - Hold it and Pause
 - And then slowly breath out
 - Repeat



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Home for the Holidays: Behavior strategies: Prioritize Connections

- Connection is Protection
 - Spend 5 minutes each day with your other children doing something
 - that is child directed
 - without parental commands or demands
 - that lets him/her be in charge, while you participate and attend to what they are doing
 - This can also be done with your special needs' child
 - Just be sure to ignore any minor misbehavior, this is about feeling connected

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Home for the Holidays: Behavior strategies: Managing parent stress

- Self care
 - Needs to happen "off to clock"
 - Give yourself 5-10 minutes or more each day to do something for yourself
 - Be present in those moments
 - This is not the time to beat yourself up over how you handled a behavior or worry about what is going to happen tomorrow
 - Take this time to reboot

From The Thriving School Psychologist

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Home for the Holidays: Behavior strategies: Managing parent stress

- Self compassion
 - Is not the same as self care
 - Needs to happen when you are “on the clock” when stress is happening, and you are IN IT
 - Develop your own “parental pause” button
 - Be mindful of when you need to STOP and take a deep breathe
- Remember, an escalated adult simply can not de-escalate an escalated child
 - Bring calm to the chaos
- Ask yourself, what would I advise or tell my best parenting friend in the same situation?
 - Give yourself the same compassion you give to your parenting friends

From The Thriving School Psychologist

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Home for the Holidays: Behavior strategies: Managing parent stress

- Our brains are wired to scan for the negative and the brain loves patterns
 - If we get up each morning and see something negative, our brain will keep scanning for more of what is wrong or negative
- How can we make a shift in this?
- Start the day with a GRATITUDE
 - Make a gratitude jar and start each day by writing down a note of gratitude or thanks and place it in the jar



From The Thriving School Psychologist

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Home for the Holidays: Behavior strategies: Summary

- Create a school break routine
- Provide choices
- Anticipate, what might be a problem or a disappointment
- BREATHE!
- Check yourself first, take a few deep breaths and then approach the situation
- Practice self-care

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Home for the holidays: Ideas for School Breaks

- Plan theme nights (Game, movie, BINGO, meals)
- Cook 2gether: have your child help in the kitchen
- DIY activities (arts and crafts, make your own playdo, putty with our sensory recipes)
- Family Storytime
- Get moving (scavenger hunt, take a walk, yoga, GO Noodle for Families, have a dance party)
- Helping hands (separating or folding laundry, wiping the table, sweeping)

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Home for the Holidays: Family Game Night- Classroom favorites

- Pop up Pig
- Crocodile Dentist
- Pop up Pirate
- Candy Land Castle
- Sequence for Kids
- Zingo
- Ned's Head
- UNO
- Jenga
- Memory
- Connect Four

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Home for the Holidays: Family Game Night- Classroom favorites



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Home for the Holidays: Movie Night

- Make a movie themed snack
- Color and cut out movie 'tickets'
- Dress for the movie
 - Hat and scarf for Frosty the Snowman
 - Favorite holiday pajamas for Polar Express

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Home for the Holidays: Holiday Movie Night

- Netflix Jingle Jangle
- How the Grinch Stole Christmas
- Frosty the Snowman
- Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer
- Elf
- The Polar Express

- Disney Sing-along Songs (available on YouTube) 30 minutes in duration
- Pixar shorts

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Home for the Holidays: BINGO night

- You can purchase all types of kids BINGO in stores or on Amazon
- BINGO materials will also be available in the Parent Portal
 - Download and print
- Online BINGO (for Apple and Android devices)
- Use dry cereal, M&M's or other small candy as markers to make the activity more fun and reinforcing
- Take turns calling the cards
- Invite family or friends to play over ZOOM

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Home for the Holidays: Cook 2gether

- Plan a theme night(s)
 - Taco Tuesday, Breakfast for Dinner, Pizza Night, Ice cream SUNDAY
- Use picture recipes like we do in the classroom
- Look for boxed mixes that have picture recipes on the box (cake, cookie, brownies, pancake)
- Bake cookies (follow the directions on the box) for friends and family
 - Spread frosting and decorate store bought cookies
- Make 'trail mix' with cereal, pretzels, candy
 - Measure, pour, mix and package in snack bags for snack or movie night!
- Mix, stir, pour, spread, and cut are skills practiced in the classroom during cooking activities

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Cooking 2gether: Examples of Picture recipes

TACO NACHOS

INGREDIENTS:

Ground Beef	
Taco Spice Mix	
Nacho Chips	
Lettuce	
Cheese	
Salsa	

Let's Make Pizza

1. take tomato sauce on crust
2. sprinkle cheese on pizza
3. put on your favorites
4. bake 15 minutes

I like on my pizza!

cheese	onions	tomato	pineapple	sausage
pepperoni	olives	bell pepper	hot pepper	peppercorn

cooking instructions

- 1 **BOIL** water in medium saucepan.
Stir in Macaroni; Cook 7 to 8 min. or until tender, stirring occasionally.
- 2 **DRAIN.** DO NOT RINSE. Return to pan.
- 3 **ADD** margarine or butter, milk

MAKES 12 TO 16 PANCAKES PANCAKES MADE IN 15 MINUTES

3 Cup Milk
1 Tablespoon Butter
1/2 Teaspoon Baking Powder

1. **MIX** all the ingredients in a bowl.
2. **COOK** 1/4 cup of batter on a hot griddle or pan.
3. **FLIP** when bubbles appear on top.
4. **DRY** the pan completely before cooking the next pancake.
5. **VERY** important: do not touch the pancakes until they are completely cooked.
6. **ENJOY!** Pancakes are best served with syrup.

BEFORE YOU DINNER: BREAKFAST SANDWICHES

What You'll Need:

- 1 slice of bread
- 1 slice of ham
- 1 slice of cheese
- 1 slice of tomato
- 1 slice of lettuce
- 1 slice of onion
- 1 slice of pepper

NOTE: RECIPE SOURCE: WWW.KIDSACTIVITIES.COM

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Home for the holidays: DIY sensory and Motor Activities

- Shaving cream
- Use empty Amazon or other cardboard boxes for coloring or painting
- Bubble wrap
- Build with toothpicks and marshmallows
- Make your own calming jar or sensory bag
 - Use glitter, small toys, water beads

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Home for the holidays: DIY sensory and Motor Activities



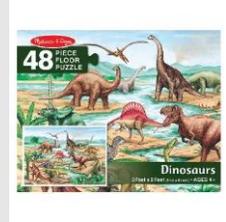
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Home for the Holidays: Family Storytime

- Choose a book (if possible, go to your local library)
 - Quick reads like Dr. Seuss, Pete the Cat
 - Chapter books like Magic Treehouse, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, Charlottes Web, James and The Giant Peach
- Get siblings involved
 - Older siblings can be readers
 - Younger siblings can choose a book
- Gather around the book, sit on pillows, get comfortable on the couch
- Use it as an early morning or before bed routine

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Home for the Holidays: Gift Guide: Puzzles for all types of learners



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Home for the Holidays: Gift Guide: Hand Fidgets

- Dimpl
- Pop-It
- Fidget Spinner
- Tangle Jr
- Kinetic Sand
- Thinking putty



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Home for the Holidays: Dollar Store & Five Below Finds

- Perfect place to shop for stocking stuffers or small grab bag gifts
- Shop ahead of time for novel toys, puzzles, games, stickers etc and use as needed throughout the week
- Plan and stock up on school supplies and art materials for DIY activities
 - Did you know many of the independent work tasks we do in the classroom are made from materials bought at the Dollar store
 - Items like colored index cards, colored pom poms, plastic silverware can all be used as sorting tasks that can keep your child engaged at the table while you are cooking dinner
- Plan a trip to the store. Make a shopping list and go shop for 1 toy, 1 puzzle, something to eat

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Home for the Holidays: Dollar Store & Five Below Finds

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Puzzles ◦ Race cars ◦ Stress/squeeze balls ◦ Water bottles ◦ Art supplies (construction paper, pads of paper, paint, markers, crayons, pipe cleaners, crepe paper, pom poms) ◦ Stickers ◦ Sidewalk chalk ◦ Crayons, markers, glue sticks (and other common school supplies for art projects) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Coloring, activity books (mazes, word search) ◦ Dry erase boards (& markers) ◦ Decks of cards ◦ Giant tweezers (use with pom poms) ◦ Foam dice ◦ Alphabet blocks ◦ Bubbles ◦ Water Beads, slime ◦ Play do (& cookie cutters) |
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Home for the Holidays: Dollar Store & Five Below Finds

Food items often are smaller serving size, so they are perfect for a cooking activity and snack

- Hot Chocolate
- Microwave popcorn
- Pudding
- Cookie, cake or muffin mix
- Pancake or waffle mix
- “movie theater” snacks

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Home for the Holidays: Summary

- Create a routine
 - Use a modified schedule that structures each day
- Provide choices when possible and in anticipation of problem behavior, non-compliance, avoidance
- Plan special family activities throughout the week
- Take time for yourself each day & give yourself the gift of self-compassion when you are in it
- Remember, an escalated adult simply can not de-escalate an escalated child
 - Bring calm to the chaos
- BREATHE!!!

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Home for the Holidays References

Some of the content and suggestions presented here today came from material originated by:

- The Autism Helper
- Thriving School Psychologist