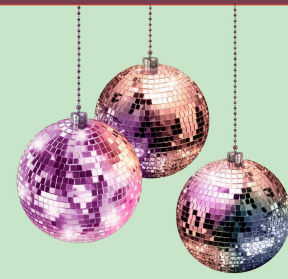




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Tis the Season...

As the holiday season approaches, many families look forward to celebration and connection. However, for students with disabilities, this time of year can bring unexpected challenges. Changes in routine, sensory overload from lights and music, increased social gatherings, house guests, and the unpredictability of holiday travel can all lead to stress, anxiety and feelings of being overwhelmed.



Most students receiving special education services thrive on structure and routine, and prolonged school closures often disrupt the predictability they rely on—potentially impacting the progress built by their educational team.

As IEP teams prepare for holiday breaks, it may be helpful to collaborate and create a transition plan for both the departure from school and the return afterward.

Below are a few practical tips to assist families in planning for the holiday season.

Strategies to Help Students Navigate the Holiday Season:

👤 **Social Stories** - to preview holiday plans and help students anticipate upcoming family gatherings, sensory environments, and social situations. Stories can include topics such as holiday travel, out-of-town visitors, schedule changes, and expectations for special events.

❄️ **Daily Anchors**- Maintain predictability by keeping consistent routines in place. Include visual schedules for unstructured times, regular meal/bedtime routines, and brief practice work from school to support continuity.

👤 **Portable Sensory Kits** - to support regulation during holiday outings. Kits may include noise-canceling headphones, fidgets, preferred toys, chewy tools, or other calming items personalized to the student's needs.

❄️ **Academic & Skill Maintenance** - to reinforce IEP goals through daily routines over the holiday break. Request a small packet of skills-based work from school to support maintenance and help with reentry after the holidays.



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