

## Useful Contacts

### **The National Autistic Society**

Autism Helpline: 0808 800 4104

Mon to Thurs, 10am-4pm

Fri, 9am-3pm (Excl. bank holidays)

### **Rompa**

Tel: 0845 230 1177

[www.rompa.com](http://www.rompa.com)

*Rompa develops and sells products that improve quality play opportunities throughout the UK, through advice, information, training and toy appraisal.*

### **Sense Toys**

Tel: 0345 257 0849

[www.sensetoys.com](http://www.sensetoys.com)

*Sense Toys sells toys and games for special needs children and kids with autism. It also offers play tips and ideas for each toy.*

*'Surviving Christmas' is a seasonal campaign run by PLUS Perth, a local mental health campaigning charity. To access our 'Surviving Christmas' pocket guide and other helpful resources, please visit [www.mentalwealthperthshire.co.uk](http://www.mentalwealthperthshire.co.uk) or call PLUS Perth on 01738 626242.*



# *Christmas with Autism Spectrum Disorders*

*A booklet to preparation, suitable  
gifts and useful contacts for those  
living with an autistic child.*

Christmas can be a confusing and distressing time for those with Autism and their families. This short guide offers tips on how to be prepared, get suitable gifts and provides contacts if you need any advice or help. This advice has kindly been used with the permission of *Your Autism Magazine*, The National Autistic Society, 2014 ([www.autism.org.uk](http://www.autism.org.uk)).

### **Preparation**

Those with Autism can become quite distressed or confused if any new activity is taking place around the holiday season, particularly in their home, which can cause upset for the rest of the family.

Preparation is the key, one of the first things you could do is to highlight the Christmas period in the family/child's calendar. It may be worth finding out when they start to do work on Christmas at school and coincide with this, this will ensure consistency for the child. Although try to be mindful that if this time frame does not leave enough to prepare, adjust as you feel appropriate.

Depending on your child, you may wish to either emphasis Christmas day only or the whole of the Christmas holidays i.e. when school breaks up and restarts, to allow the child time to prepare for the change in routine. It is helpful to highlight any changes in the calendar for example, days you plan to buy things like the Christmas tree or when friends or family are coming to stay to reduce distress as much as possible. Trying to include your child in the Christmas process can be important to familiarise the child with the changes that are going to happen, even if they have seen it the year before. For example, taking them to buy the tree or hanging the decorations. This will hopefully prevent any negative reactions to new things being in a familiar environment. You could alternatively decorate the house over a few days, if the change in surroundings is particularly stressful. If your child does not want to be involved it can be helpful to find

them a job to focus on, which can make them feel included and less anxious.

Talking to child may help as well, what you will cover will differ for each child. Discussing what Christmas means and showing images of what changes will be taking place i.e. the Christmas tree and its decorations or the food you are going to eat may benefit the child. It essential to remember if they are quite literal, they may get anxious if Christmas does not appear how you portrayed it to be.

### **Suitable Gifts**

Gifts will vary for each child. It may be worth not having a huge number of presents as it can overwhelm the child. Please find some suggestions below:

- 1) Trampolines – good for using up energy
- 2) Sensory toys – Bubble tubes/columns, fibre optic plumes that change colour or bubble-making machines.
- 3) Board Games – ‘The Socially Speaking Game’, Battleships or Guess Who?
- 4) Music – CD or an instrument
- 5) Bike or a Tricycle
- 6) Water toys
- 7) Books – read along ones, or ones that are accompanied by a story tape for example, The Hungry Caterpillar.

Following the link below will provide you with advice of choosing toys for autistic children:

[www.insidethebubble.co.uk/toys.php](http://www.insidethebubble.co.uk/toys.php).