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Family to Family

A Newsletter to families from families

The Best Holidays Yet! By Megan Fennelly

Now is the time of year that I start to get emails and information about "Surviving the Holidays" in regards to having a child with special needs. I don't know about you, but I don't want to "survive" the holidays. I want my special needs child as well as my whole family to enjoy, participate, and celebrate this special time of year. Yes, there are certainly more challenges with the change in routine and time off from school, but with some planning the holidays can be fun for everyone.

Some tips and strategies that have been helpful to me:

- Give your child a schedule of events for the day. It can be a written schedule or pictures of the activities for younger children. Your child will feel calmer knowing where they are going and what to expect.
- Go at your child's pace.
- Have a quiet area your child can retreat to if they are getting too overwhelmed. I also have distraction toys (iPod, books, sensory fidget toys, etc) available if a break is needed.
- Educate your family and friends ahead of time regarding your child's interests or things that may be upsetting for them.
- Choose gifts for your child that are developmentally appropriate.



It may be helpful to ask teachers and therapists what type of activities your child likes to play with at school and in therapy.

Here's wishing you and your family the best holidays yet!

Hand in Hand by Michele Tomaino

Sports are big in my house. My 13 year old is a huge sports fan. Loves to watch, loves to play. Problem is he has some physical limitations that prevent him from keeping up with his peers. So, he misses out on the camaraderie and competitiveness related to sports. Luckily, I have found 2 programs that fill this void. Children's Lightning Wheels, a Paralympic Sports club sponsored by Children's Specialized Hospital, is a team for athletes ages 5-22 with a



information, visit www.childrens-specialized.org. Another program is Team Impact. Their mission is to improve the quality of life for children facing life-threatening diseases by matching

Go Team Impact

primary diagnosis of a physical disability. For more information, visit www.goteamimpact.org. If you would like to nominate a child for this program, please contact a member of Family Faculty.



Parent Tips

- Make a Visual Schedule: This will help children to have some sense of structure during the busy holiday season.
- Establish Warm Up Times and Personal Space Parameters: Prepare relatives and friends that your child may only see a few times per year that additional time may be required for your child to warm up to them.
- All children can hit a "melting point" during the holidays: Too many people, too much noise, so many presents, etc. Establish code words and share them with your family. When you see that your child may need a break, just say the code word and everyone else will know that your child needs a break without making anyone feel uncomfortable, especially your child.
- Set Your Own Expectations in Advance: Remember you are only one person so be kind to yourself too. Try not to put too many demands on yourself so you are feeling stressed and anxious. This will enable you to enjoy the holidays and savor each moment spent with your children, family, and friends.

Healthy and Happy

By Carrie Snyder

The winter holidays are a wonderful time to visit with family and friends, most often over meals. The frequency of parties and holiday temptation often distracts us from our daily healthy routines. Below are some suggestions as to how you can enjoy this festive time of year without sacrificing your family's health.

- Choose fresh whole foods such as veggies and dip or fruit over processed food items. They are high in nutrients and lower in

calories than crackers and packaged pastries.

- Eat a healthy snack before parties or big meals. Having an apple, plain or with peanut butter or cheese helps you feel satiated and have an easier time passing on unhealthy party foods.

- Make sure you stay hydrated. It not only is beneficial to your body



Healthy Eating Tips

but also helps keep you full so you will eat less. If you don't like plain water, you can add a lemon wedge or try flavored seltzer.

- Don't skip completely skip dessert. This time of year there are many special once a year holiday desserts. Treat yourself to a small piece of that family holiday treat and skip the other everyday junk.

Did You Know?

By Linda Waddell

Did your family purchase or rent a generator due to Hurricane Sandy specifically to power medical equipment? If so, families with special needs children with a diagnosed medical condition may be able to get reimbursement for the purchase or rental of generators post Hurricane Sandy. In order to qualify the generator would have to have been purchased after the

REIMBURSEMENT FOR GENERATOR PURCHASED POST-DISASTER

declaration of a State of Emergency or during the days following the crisis. In addition to the eligibility requirements for the individuals and household program the generator purchased or rented must be used specifically to power a medically required piece of equipment. For more detailed information and instructions on how to apply visit the website below. A copy of your genera-

tor receipt and a letter from a physician supporting the need of a generator for medical purposes is required.

https://faq.fema.gov/app/answers/detail/a_id/297/~reimbursement-for-generator-purchased-post-disaster

Family Fun

By Pat O'Hanlon

Happy Holidays and Happy Winter! One of my family's favorite things to do is our traditional holiday family ride. We get together with another family, both of us have a child in a power wheelchair, and we all squeeze into one of our high top vans. We get out our "Family Band in a Box" which consists of home-

made musical instruments and dollar store tambourines and kazoos. Our homemade instruments are bells on a rope-good for ringing, pebbles in a used water bottle-great for shaking, many spoons – good for tapping together and small pots – great for symbols. We each select our instrument. Then we drive around our town looking at all the houses that are decorated for the holidays while we sing our fa-



vorite holiday songs and play our musical instruments. We top the night off by going to one of our homes for hot chocolate, homemade cookies and lots of talking and laughing. So make some music, have great fun, and most of all enjoy and appreciate each other.



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