

T.E.A.C.H. TIMES

Teaching and Education of Autistic Children Through
Collaboration and Harmony



Jersey City
Public Schools
Department of
Special Education

Keep the Holidays Happy:

Fall 2015

The holiday season is a time to spend with friends and family, but there's a lot going on that can be tough for kids with special needs, and it can be tough to enjoy the season when not all your friends and family understand your child's issues or are supportive of how you manage them.

You can make the season a little cheerier by having a low-key advocacy plan for talking about your child's issues and some ideas of how to respond to comments that may come up at family gathering. Here are some Do's and Don'ts to consider:

DON'T: Assume that people are being ill-intentioned.

Some people seem critical or ask questions that may seem insensitive simply because they don't know much about your child's disability. Older relatives may misunderstand your child's abilities or have outdated information about how the issues are managed.

DO: Correct misinformation gracefully.

Hearing someone say something patently wrong can make you angry, but try to keep as calm as possible. Gather your thoughts, take a breath and explain what's incorrect about

the assumption. Then provide the correct information. It's helpful to keep in mind that you're trying to explain and educate, not defend yourself or your child.

DON'T: Feel the need to tell everybody everything.

There are some friends and family you may only see a few times a year. If you're not in touch with them regularly, it's okay to provide just enough information to make it through the day. For example, "Gwen had a recent surgery and she's still recovering. She may need to leave the table before the meal is over to rest."

DO: Figure out what you need to tell certain people ahead of time.

There are also people who need more information to help you have a low-key holiday. For instance, if your child has food allergies, it's important to share with the host of a holiday meal which foods are a problem. If you're sharing a babysitter with family who live in a different town or state, so you can all enjoy a night out you'll need to explain your child's needs and how to handle them.

DON'T: Worry about the technical terms (unless people want to know)

Explaining that John has Autism Spectrum Disorder, Support Level 2, gives people a name but it doesn't help them understand what it means for your child. They may know what ASD is, but they might not know

how it affects his daily life.

DO: Explain what it means in plain language.

Let people know that John may have a hard time with conversation or a difficult time adjusting to the noise or new people. Tell them what they can do to make things easier. For example, "John may not want you to hug him, but he'll definitely be happy to say hello to you." The point is to let them know what they can expect and how to help. Encourage them to ask questions!

DON'T: Focus entirely on child's challenges.

Remember that the holidays are a time for celebration and there are many things about your child to celebrate. Be positive about his accomplishments and bring light to his engaging qualities. Share the small, funny everyday kid things that have happened since you last saw your friends and family.

DO: Let your family celebrate and enjoy the holidays!

At holiday gatherings family and friends are there to support and celebrate you, too. You don't have to spend all your time talking about your child. There's plenty of opportunity for you to share in their joys and for them to share in yours.

PARENTING SPECIAL NEEDS.ORG Nov/Dec
2015 Amanda Morin





Jersey City Public Schools Department of Special Education

**We're on the Web:
www.jcboe.org**

Websites:

www.abatraining.com

www.autismnj.org

www.autismspeaks.org

Dr. Gerard Crisonino

Director

Candace Coccaro

Supervisor

Jennifer Arends, BCBA

Kristen Nardini, BCBA

Amanda Philp, BCBA

Stephanie Velenger, BCBA

Dorothy Walsh, Lead Teacher



**JERSEY CITY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Respite: Take a break to recharge

Most parent with both special needs and “typical” have a great deal of difficulty making time for priorities other than work and their children. Most parents may say it is important to take a break, but they behave as if they do not believe that there are priorities beyond work and their children. In this over-scheduled society of ours, we are in constant motion and constantly running to do the next thing on our “to-do” list. To top it off, these are stressful times with the dramatic increase in job losses coupled with a dramatic decrease in people’s bank accounts. It is more important than ever to make time for yourself, to fill up your energy reserves in order to be the best parent, spouse, family member and friend you can be.

At times you need to take a break, a respite or a pause in your life to recharge. A simple way to deal with the stressors of life is much like a stoplight. Most of the time we are at green with the go, go, go of work, therapists and doctors appointments, grocery stores, hardware stores, school meeting etc. You are full steam ahead...until the yellow light turns on. What does the yellow light mean? Proceed with caution. Look listen and assess if you need to take a respite from your child and the daily grind of life. The red light of course is when you actually stop and take a break to recharge. Figuring out the signs of when your yellow light is critical to having a far more harmonious, satisfying and joyous life.



Let’s start with the most obvious and severe examples that your light is yellow. “Many parents, especially mothers, put everyone and everything ahead of themselves. Stress can get to everyone but here are a few signs it may be leading to something more serious like anxiety and/or depression:

- Changes in sleep patterns
- Feeling overwhelmed or anxious
- Changes in eating habits
- Anger or mood swings
- Relationship problems



If the symptoms are getting in the way of your daily functioning, it’s time to get help! Don’t suffer in silence. Sometimes just talking out how your are feeling can make a big difference. Family and friends can help you by allowing you to vent; but often when these symptoms occur, you may need the help of a trained therapist to you back on track.