

Unwrapping Calm – Tips to make the Holiday Season more Accessible

The holiday season is a busy time for everyone and as a result it can sometimes be stressful. In this guide you'll find strategies of prioritising your time, how to set boundaries and how to make the season, including gift giving, as accessible as possible.



Maintaining wellbeing during the holidays

- Set some boundaries - It's ok to say no to things and look after your energy. So often we feel that we must agree to every party or event. This can sometimes be overwhelming and stretch your already tight resources. So, remind yourself you can say no and it's ok.
- Take plenty of breaks - all the preparation and planning can take a lot out of you. So, break up the day or activity into smaller chunks that will be easier to manage. If you're managing health conditions, then things may tire you out more quickly so make sure you factor in plenty of rest.
- Plan beforehand some healthier alternatives - the holiday season can sometimes be quite unhealthy, so having some low sugar snacks is a great way of treating yourself without having to compromise on your health. You can also find Fake-away recipes which recreate takeaways in a healthier way.

- Give others plenty of jobs - make sure you delegate holiday jobs and get the family involved. You could put all the jobs into a hat and get family members to take turns pulling the jobs out.
- Create lists so you're organised.

Making the Holiday Season Accessible

Even though the holiday period is full of excitement and wonder if you have a disability, you can feel left out and isolated. Here are some ways that you can ensure to include those, especially who have a visual impairment. You will also find ways that you can become involved over the holiday period if you have a visual impairment or other disability.

- Write holiday cards using large bold print or Braille. You could also leave an audible message using a pen friend.
- Label gifts accessibly - you could use large print, Braille or a pen friend to label gifts, or make tactile tags and use tactile wrapping paper.
- Take part in decorating the Christmas tree (this could be full sized or a small one to keep in your room).
- Make a tactile Christmas book that your child can become immersed in. This could involve putting things into the book that remind you of the holidays that your child can take out, hold, or smell that generate a conversation about the object.
- Involve your child in creating a Christmas present list for family and involve them in the process of buying the present so that they can feel more involved.
- Putting decorations at touch level - so that your child can interact with some decorations as well.
- You could create a holiday box with different items relating to the season - a child can then take out each thing which sparks a conversation about its use.
- Buy accessible games so that everyone can join in. You can buy games that use Braille or create your own using Tacti-marks, bumpons or raised paint. You can buy accessible games from a range of shops including the RNIB Shop.
- Use tactile decorations which a person can feel.
- Use scent - you could use a Christmas essential oil blend or some cloves stuck in an orange.

- Use a paper cutter rather than scissors to cut wrapping paper.
- Use a gift bag rather than wrapping paper if you find wrapping presents difficult. You can sometimes also order a gift pre-wrapped.
- Get a Sellotape dispenser so you don't have to cut the tape yourself.



Accessible Presents

- If you're getting a gift for someone with low vision making sure gifts have good colour contrast or bold text is important.
- Easy & bold colouring books for children and adults (There are a wide range on Amazon).
- Scented felt tip pens.
- Scented gifts - perfume/ wax melts or candles, essential oils or toiletries.
- A head torch for someone who still has some vision, as having good lighting can make some tasks easier.

- Low vision equipment like bumpons or a liquid level Indicator could be good as stocking fillers.
- Tactile Rubik's cube or fidget toys and tactile puzzles.
- Gift cards which can be redeemed online may be easier (book vouchers for example).

Christmas Crackers

Here are 24 tips to keep yourself smiling through the holiday season.



1. Make your bed every day, it's a little bit of order you can make for yourself.
2. It's ok to say 'No' to things, if you're tired and don't have the energy. Saying 'No' may mean that you have the energy to say 'Yes' to something you really want to do.
3. Be in the moment and dance like nobody's watching to your favourite song.
4. Write a thank you note to yourself, you're doing amazing so acknowledge it!
5. List 3 things that have made you smile today.
6. Spend 10 minutes talking to a friend or family member about something you're both interested in.

7. Ask yourself how you're feeling today and listen carefully for the answer.
8. Spend 5 minutes just sitting quietly and being, your time is precious so spend some on yourself.
9. Wear a colour that makes you smile.
10. Put together an upbeat song playlist.
11. Spend some time in the bath or shower letting the water wash the negativity away and towel yourself down feeling cleansed.
12. Spray some of your favourite scents around your space, so that you're reminded of happier memories.
13. Send a holiday card to someone to let them know you're thinking about them, we all like to be remembered.
14. Take time to notice the nature around you... what birds have come out to brave the winter cold? Are there any plants or flowers that are in bloom? What smells are carried on the winter air?
15. Have a warm drink and focus on how that warmth makes you feel, be in the moment.
16. Go for a walk with a loved one, laughing and making memories is so important.
17. Make a list of everything you like about yourself and stick on the mirror or fridge so you can check in with your best self regularly (you could also record a voice note to yourself so that you can hear your best qualities).
18. Wake up each day and say out loud "I choose positivity", if you start the day with a positive mind set then more positive things will happen.
19. Spend some time in a comfortable place and breathe slowly in and out letting all the tension melt away until you feel relaxed.
20. Have a sweet treat (because we can't have advent without chocolate, can we?) everything in moderation's good.
21. Open your curtains at the beginning of each day, right now the world can be scary but opening your curtains can be one way of starting to let the world in on your terms.
22. A little bit of glitter goes a long way, so let some sparkle into your life, whether it's tinsel or something else that brightens up your life.
23. Come off your phone or social media and spend some time focusing on yourself or the people you're spending time with.
24. Share how you're feeling, things seem much bigger when we keep things to ourselves, so share what's going on inside and be in control of your thoughts rather than letting them be in control of you!

Here are some more tips that may help support you through the holiday period.

- A fun way of delegating Christmas jobs is the Christmas Lucky Dip - write down all the jobs that need doing and take turns pulling them out of the Christmas Hat (fun for all ages).
- If you're not feeling happy that's ok - sometimes we feel lots of pressure to be happy at Christmas, but it's ok if you don't. Take some time out for you and know that happier times are coming in the future.
- Have regular breaks - you don't have to do everything, so allow yourself time to relax and recharge so that you can enjoy what you like.
- Write a to-do list then number what is most important to do, first this can help you feel more organised and complete the important tasks when you need to.
- Enjoy a Christmas film with audio description.
- Make Christmas a sensory experience, you can find essential oils that smell Christmasy and play carols and songs it doesn't have to be visual.
- Think also around the noise levels, overly loud music or lots of people talking at once, can overwhelm people with a dual sensory impairment.



Most importantly have fun and remember the perfect Christmas doesn't exist.

