

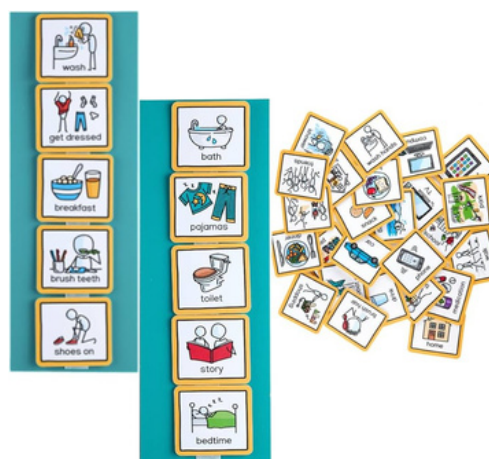
Accepting the Spectrum

A monthly newsletter sharing information and support for families, caregivers, and friends of children on the Autism Spectrum

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With November coming to an end, the holiday season is upon us! While this is an exciting time for many to gather together and celebrate, this may be difficult for some children with autism. Holiday parties often bring large gatherings with loved ones, unfamiliar faces, changes in routine, loud noises, and a different environment. To prepare your child for the upcoming holidays, there are many ways to help your child feel comfortable so they, too, can enjoy celebrating this upcoming holiday season!

- Plan ahead! Social stories and visual schedules are great tools that you can use with your child to prepare them for changes in their typical routine. Reading a social story to your child about what to expect prior to going to a holiday party with loved ones can be helpful for your child to understand what will happen. It is important to review the social story with your child before the gathering, as well as the day of the gathering. A visual schedule can also be helpful for your child to know what will happen during the day of a holiday gathering since their routine will be different.



- Bring preferred toys or activities with you to holiday parties and family gatherings. Additionally, if your child is sensitive to loud noises, bring noise cancelling headphones with you. This can be a great tool to use during large gatherings!



- **Decorate your home gradually!** If you do decorate your home for the holidays, it can be helpful to consider decorating over a week or two. Sudden changes to one's environment or happening all at once can be overwhelming for some children with autism. It can also be helpful to include your child in assisting you with decorating. You may have your child help you decorate your tree, the living room, or another area of the house. You can also create a schedule of what areas of the house you plan on decorating over the next week or two. For example, on Saturday we will decorate the tree, and next weekend we will put up lights around the house!



- **Practice opening gifts with your child!** It is that time of the year that many receive gifts! If you have a shoe box or any other small box, you can wrap it with wrapping paper and practice unwrapping gifts with your child. This is also a great way to incorporate waiting, and responding to receiving a gift such as saying "Thank you" or having your child use their AAC device to say "Thank you".



Agency News:

As a friendly reminder, Collaborative ABA Services, LLC will be closed on the following days:

- Thursday, November 28th, 2024
- Friday, November 29th, 2024
- Tuesday, December 24th, 2024
- Wednesday, December 25th, 2024
- Tuesday, December 31st, 2024
- Wednesday, January 1st, 2025

Lisa's Coaching Corner

Growing up with a younger sister with autism, I still remember what it felt like to be stared at by strangers at Kmart or how disappointed I was when we had to cut a trip to the amusement park short because my sister was overwhelmed. But of all the things I remember, the memories that sting the most are overhearing close family members call my sister a 'brat,' 'spoiled,' and theorize she 'just needed more discipline.'

This was over 35 years ago, and back then, my sister was a girl diagnosed with everything we now recognize as autism—but not autism itself. No matter how much my Mom tried to educate family, friends and Catholic school nuns about ADHD and sensory processing disorder, they couldn't see past the meltdowns and elopements.

To them "bad" behavior = bad kid and/or bad parenting. It's no wonder why, for YEARS, my mom avoided taking my sister anywhere that was not 100% necessary. Perhaps this is also why, when my son Ben was diagnosed, my Mom gave me one big piece of advice: "Don't stop taking him places. Give him as many experiences as you can."

I knew she was right and, following my divorce when Ben was 4, I did not have much of a choice. Still, it was not easy. There was a lot of trial and error, meltdowns and noisy exits. But I kept at it. And what helped me the most? One of the many resources my parents did not have 35 years ago: social stories. Social stories are meant to help prepare children and let them know what to expect in order to ease their anxiety and allow them to feel more in control. But here is the thing — they helped me, too.

The process of creating stories for Ben helped prepare me for the possibility of Ben struggling and put my brain to work thinking through what I would do ahead of time. Not only was Ben prepared, I was, too! Does this mean every outing was seamless? Of course not!! But, they were filled with a lot less drama for me. That is because I felt confident and prepared, knowing exactly what I would do and would not do, if Ben melted down, strangers stared or a family member offered me an unsolicited opinion. This is possible for you, too!

If you want to feel more in control while out in the wild with your child, I have the perfect workshop for you! On Thursday, November 21st at 7 p.m. EST, I am hosting a free workshop where I will teach you how to create compelling social stories for your child in SECONDS, using CHAT GPT.

SECONDS, using CHAT GPT.

Gone are the days of boring templates or staying up until midnight writing the "perfect" story. With the techniques I'm going to teach + ChatGPT, you'll be able to create engaging, personalized stories in seconds. Whether it's about taking turns, visiting the dentist, road trips to grandma's, reading social cues, managing screen time, or even preparing for puberty—whatever you need, you'll have it ready in no time!

Join me on November 21st at 7 p.m. EST to learn how to:

- 1 Prepare Your Child: Make new situations and changes easier with simple stories tailored just for them.
- 2 Lower Anxiety for Both of You: Help your child feel calm and ready, while you feel more in control.
- 3 Create Quick and Easy Stories: I'll show you how to create these stories in seconds using ChatGPT—no tech skills needed.

This is your chance to stop hiding and start building confidence for you and your child.

Reserve Your Spot Now using the link below. ↓

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/8017312625217/WN_44xPHdGaQ3KNUuxLIXXJg



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<https://linktr.ee/LisaCandera>