

Creating a Neurodivergent-Friendly Festive Environment

General:

- **Do NOT put pressure or expectations on the festive season - this can increase anxiety and heighten difficulties with executive functioning (such as struggles with making a gift list or knowing what to buy others)**
- **Do NOT influence behaviour with Santa or 'Elf on a Shelf'**
- **Embrace stimming, retreating to safe spaces, not using mouth words**

Sensory:

- **Be aware of sensory profiles for each individual Neurodivergent person**
- **Do NOT flood environments with decorations that may be too overwhelming e.g. flashing lights, uncomfortable festive clothing/accessories**
- **Avoid playing loud music or music when lots of other things are happening at the same time (sensory overload)**
- **Do NOT force physical touch e.g. hugging, kissing, handshaking**
- **Stick to safe foods - do NOT force foods that the person does not like or is not comfortable with**

Social (expectations):

- **Avoid/limit the number of unexpected, new, rarely-seen visitors/guests (or be clear on who is coming and when)**
- **Do NOT force participation in conversation or festive customs e.g. family games, watching holiday TV specials/films**
- **Allow time away to escape, relax or recover without pressure to return**
- **Do NOT do surprises if the person doesn't like them - tell them what gifts they are getting/stick to what they ask for**
- **Allow opening presents privately so they can process the gift and give an honest response - this avoids masked reactions/forced scripting**

Make the holidays enjoyable for everyone - including Neurodivergent people - no matter what sacrifices of privilege it takes