



# Helping Hands for the Homefront

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## Anxious kids and the Holidays

*The holidays are usually a time of excitement and fun for everyone, especially children, but for kids who struggle with anxiety, it can be a stressful time. Here are some suggestions on how to make holidays the best they can be.*

- 1. Give your child plenty of warning and “previewing” of the days and weeks ahead.** Most anxious children are planners. They like to know what is happening at all times. Take the time to tell your child what is on the schedule each day. With school breaks, holiday parties and lots of traveling — their routine will probably be off.
- 2. Pace yourself** — you don't have to attend every holiday event you are invited to. Make sure to plan some down time between each event you attend. Go home and let your child recharge after holiday parties.
- 3. Don't force social interaction on your introverted child.** Some anxious children are more socially self-conscious. Having a bunch of friends and distant relatives hug, kiss and interrogate them can be more than some kids can handle. You can tell your kids prior to arriving at a social gathering that you expect them to say “hi” and to smile, but you will not force them to hug or interact with people.
- 4. Allow your child to “get away”.** Your child may need a safe place to which he can retreat at a relative's house. A nearby bedroom is ideal. Show him immediately upon arrival where he can go, and put some of his toys or ipad in the room.
- 5. Watch the sugar and caffeine** — Lots of holiday treats can cause any child to feel dysregulated.
- 6. Make sure everyone is getting good sleep.**



## Parent Workshops & Upcoming Events

**Parent Support Group** (Academy parents)  
January 5, 2017 6:00-7:30

**Parent support Group** (KOG)  
January 10, 2017 9:30-10:30

**Latino Parent Meeting**  
January 24, 2017 9:30-10:30

**Managing Challenging Behavior**  
With Kim Ceccarelli, BCBA  
January 26, 2017 10:00-11:30

**February-** Stay tuned for Celebrate the Love festivities!

*Also- check our website at [www.nsedu.org](http://www.nsedu.org)  
For info on February workshops...details coming soon!*





## Gift ideas for Kids & Teens

- Have family members donate to the cost of purchasing a larger gift (ex. trampoline in yard, swim lessons, Lazy Boy recliner, etc.)
- Favorite items- duplicate copies of favorite DVD's or T-shirts, etc.
- Toys that promote indoor fun- for those winter days when you are stuck inside.
- Useful tools for everyday activities- meals, bathing, etc.



Body Sock



Teeter Popper



EzPz placemat



"Hickies" shoe elastics



Sensory jewelry



Chewy Zipper pull



Sensory cube- fidget toy

**Most of these items can be found on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)**

## Social Skills for the season of gift giving

Giving and receiving gifts is an important social skill. Especially useful when a child opens a “not very exciting” sweater from Grammy!

Pre-teaching and practice is the best intervention here. BEFORE your family and friends arrive with gifts for your child, it’s important to practice how to receive gifts.

To do this you need some practice gifts to open. You don’t need to buy actual presents to wrap, you can take a child’s existing toys and wrap them in paper towel (good practice for learning to not to say “Oh, I already have that”), or you can hide a spoon in a pot and have your child open the lid of the pot. Or, put a rock in a bag and have your child open the bag. The idea is that the actual gift doesn’t matter. So, the more mundane the practice items, the better to teach this skill: The gift is in the giving, not the content.

To practice, you need to show/demonstrate how to open the package. Show a smile on your face, look at the person who gave it and say “Thank you.” Then show how to play with the toy or do something appropriate with it instead of just putting it back down or walking away. Have your child imitate you.

Examples of some things you can say when you get a gift:

“Thank you”

“That’s really nice”

“Cool!”

“My favorite!”

**Discuss gifts with family and friends.** Don’t leave the door open to random gifts. Give people a list of items you know your child either likes or expects. Explain about your child’s special interests and assure them it’s ok to buy yet another train, dinosaur or whatever your child collects.

• **Prepare your child for unexpected gifts.** Write a social story teaching him how to respond and role-play until he’s comfortable. Talk about what he can do with a gift he doesn’t like. Rehearse beforehand with your child a single, universal phrase, like “thank you so much” or “this is so thoughtful” that will work in all situations.

