

Different Brains Inc. Presents

# SPECTRUMLY *Speaking*

WITH  
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## A Holiday Spectrumtacular Handout

*This handout is meant to accompany the Holiday episode of the Spectrumly Speaking podcast. If you haven't listened yet, go to [DifferentBrains.org](http://DifferentBrains.org) or your favorite podcast provider, and give it a listen while reading the below outline! We hope both the episode and this handout can get you, or your loved one, through the holidays meltdown-free!*

### **I. WHY ARE THE HOLIDAYS CHALLENGING FOR INDIVIDUALS ON THE SPECTRUM?**

- Disruption of Routine
- Sensory Differences
- Increased Social Demands/Obligations
- Susceptibility to Overload / Being Overwhelmed
- Increase in General Demands when in Public Places (i.e. more people shopping, more people traveling, more chaos across environments, more energy present in all ranges of interactions - the “culture” of holidays, particularly in the US)
- Increase in Emotional Demands

## **II. STRATEGIES FOR SPECIFIC STRESSORS: TRAVELING**

- a. Plan ahead!
- b. Travel with someone who understands you well if you can - if you cannot have someone available on call who can be a support person!
- c. Make sure “tools” are accessible (i.e. sensory tools, food, beverages, headphones, preferred activities, etc.)
- d. Pack ahead of time (and maybe even break into components over the course of several days in advance of departure date)
- e. Take recharge days before/after travel
- f. Get a good night’s sleep before travel!

## **III. STRATEGIES FOR SPECIFIC STRESSORS: SOCIAL/FAMILY INTERACTIONS**

- a. Collaborate with partners/family members about what topics are acceptable/off-limits to be discussed in advance of attending family events
- b. Know your limits and boundaries!
- c. Communicate in advance about your limits and boundaries
- d. Review with a safe family member or friend what the social rules and expectations might be for that event (i.e. dress code, etc.)
- e. Family Members - Ask your Aspies what they need!
- f. Aspies - Ask your family members what they need!

## **IV. STRATEGIES FOR SPECIFIC STRESSORS: HOSTING**

- a. Differences between hosting when living independently vs. family hosting an event while living in your family's home
- b. If planning your own event - plan with your needs and boundaries in mind
- c. If attending a family hosted event (i.e. you don't get to plan it yourself), discuss in advance with your family what your needs are for alone time, break time and your ability to sustain participation
- d. Personal space boundaries (i.e. is it acceptable for people to be in your room? Are there spaces that are off limits?)

## **V. STRATEGIES FOR SPECIFIC STRESSORS: GIFT GIVING/RECEIVING**

- a. Gift Giving:**
  - i. Gifts don't need to be a surprise
  - ii. Acknowledge your budget and what is reasonable within price range/number of people to give gifts to
  - iii. Understand that it's okay to not give gifts just because "it's expected"
  - iv. Discuss in advance with people if you are or are not giving gifts
  - v. Discuss in advance spending budgets for gifts
  - vi. Discuss in advance what people want for gifts
  - vii. Get gift receipts!
  - viii. If a person does not like your gift, it is not a personal

# V. STRATEGIES FOR SPECIFIC STRESSORS (Cont.): GIFT GIVING/RECEIVING

## b. Gift Receiving

- i. Honesty might not be the best policy, but gratitude is!
- ii. If you receive a gift you don't like, you can problem solve LATER what to do with it (i.e. return, exchange, re-gift)
- iii. What to do if you receive a gift and you didn't purchase a gift for that person or plan on purchasing a gift for that person

# VI. STRATEGIES FOR SPECIFIC STRESSORS: MEAL PLANNING

## a. Hosting

- i. Plan your menu around your dietary needs
- ii. If you're concerned with people having what they want, then host a potluck event

## b. Attending Someone Else's Event

- i. Communicate about any dietary restrictions
- ii. Bring something that you can eat for everyone in attendance - but communicate your intention to do so to the host in advance

## c. Dining Out

- i. Call the restaurant to communicate any dietary restrictions - they appreciate this, especially if you're joining a large party
- ii. Ask the organizer in advance how the bill will be split so you're aware of ahead of time
- iii. Look up restaurant online - get a sense of menu and sensory needs in advance

## **VII. STRATEGIES FOR SPECIFIC STRESSORS: SUMMARY POINTS**

- a. COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE**
- b. Self-Advocacy**
  - i. Routines
  - ii. Boundaries
  - iii. Limits
  - iv. Needs
- c. Strategies for avoiding meltdowns**
  - i. Self-care
  - ii. Sensory Needs/Strategies
  - iii. Communication, communication, communication
  - iv. Prepare, prepare, prepare

**Happy Holidays from Spectrumly  
Speaking and Different Brains Inc.!**

**Be sure to check out past episodes of the  
Spectrumly Speaking podcast on  
DifferentBrains.org, and subscribe to us  
on your favorite podcast app!**

## About Spectrumly Speaking:

Spectrumly Speaking is the podcast dedicated to women on the autism spectrum, produced by Different Brains®. Every two weeks join our hosts Becca Lory, CAS, BCCS (a Life Coach, Certified Autism Specialist, and Autism advocate that is herself on the spectrum) and Katherine Cody, Psy.D. (a licensed clinical psychologist specializing in people on the autism spectrum) as they discuss topics and news stories, share personal stories, and interview some of the most fascinating voices from the autism community. Previous guests have included Liana Holliday Willey, Ed.D., Anita Lesko, Dena Gassner, Dr. Stephen Shore, Australian autism advocate Barb Cook, and many more!

## About Different Brains:

Different Brains ® is a 501C3 nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the understanding and acceptance of the basic variations in the human brain known as neurodiversity; ending the stigma attached to the related diagnoses and treatment; uniting silos of resources and research whose goals could be better achieved through collaboration; offering support to families and caregivers; and improving the lives and maximizing the potential of those whose brains may be different.

