



Explaining Thanksgiving to Your Autistic Child

Thanksgiving is a yearly holiday that families and friends all over the country come together to celebrate. It can be an overwhelming holiday for someone with autism, especially if they don't understand what is happening. Here are some great tips to help you prepare to have the best holiday possible!

- Start by explaining what Thanksgiving is
 - Do it in a way they will understand.
 - Tell them it's a national holiday celebrated every November.
 - If your child is into facts or history, tell them the first official Thanksgiving was 225 years ago, in 1789.
 - If your child likes visuals, show them some photos or read a great storybook.
 - Explain that Thanksgiving is a day to give thanks.
 - They may ask a lot of questions, but try and keep it simple.
 - Giving thanks for the things that make us happy – like our parents, siblings, grandparents, our home, a favorite toy, and much more.
 - Creating a fun activity for this can be great. Making a list or drawing will help with their spelling, writing, and verbal skills.
- Getting to the Thanksgiving Festivities
 - Thanksgiving is celebrated at a number of places – friends, parents', cousins', sisters', etc., and the day may require you to do some traveling by car, plane, or train!
 - Prepare for the travel time. You know your child best and how they may react to a plane ride, or long car ride.
 - Explain to them where you're going and why- something you may have to do a couple of times.
 - Don't forget the toys, books, and snacks for the ride!
- Dinnertime!
 - Thanksgiving is often celebrated with a big group of people and excessive amounts of delicious food.
 - Share with your child the traditional dinner your family shares. Make sure there will be something for them to eat – in case of any allergies, or for those picky eaters!
- Family and Friends
 - Thanksgiving dinners can vary from being very large to very small. With family members from wall to wall!

- Explain to your child who is going to be there, especially if they tend to get overwhelmed with large crowds.
- They're Special Place on the Special Day
 - If possible, arrange with your host to have a quiet place your child can go if they are feeling overwhelmed.
 - Find a place where they can sit or lay down, away from all the noise and people.
- Helping Out
 - If possible, invite your child to help out!
 - It can be helping setting up the table, gathering everyone for dinner, or even help preparing a dish!

Remember it is a holiday about being thankful. Be thankful for having your very special child with you and your special family. Don't stress too much, if you prepare the holiday will go great!

Happy Thanksgiving from our family to yours!