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Florida Autism Center

Tips for a safe and fun 4th of July for those with ASD

These tips, presented by the Florida Autism Center, can help make social outings more enjoyable for children with ASD and their families.

1. Talk about it. Prepare the child as much as possible. Explain that there will be loud noises and lots of people. Encourage him to ask for a break if needed.
2. Maintain routine as much as is possible. Loading up on sweets all day then heading to a crowded park in the evening might not be the greatest idea.
3. Shorten your time limit expectations. Perhaps she can't handle a family party AND a fireworks display. Prioritize.
4. Kids with autism (or any young kid, really) can go on sensory overload on a day like the 4th. Be sure that your child has ample opportunities to find a quiet place and have a break. Plan for quiet moments throughout the festivities.
5. If you are going to a fireworks display, consider taking along an iPod or something to help drown out some of the noise.
6. Pay attention to your child's needs and respect their limits. If you see that she is struggling to suppress a meltdown, leave the event.
7. Park as close as you can to the festivities and take a wagon, a blanket, or some space that your child can label as "his."
8. YOU may be there for the fireworks, but your child may not notice the display or may be frightened by it. Take along some preferred activities to lessen the possibilities of needing to chase, entertain, or quell fears in your child may be very helpful to all of you having an enjoyable experience.
9. IMPORTANT! Keep in mind that children, with or without autism, need a plan for if they get lost. If your child has verbal skills, review basics before you go out to a crowded place. Important questions to review are: 'What is Mommy's / Daddy's / etc. REAL name (not just Mommy)?' and 'What is Mommy's / Daddy's cell phone number?' If your child is able, choose a place where you will meet if you get separated and review it several times throughout the evening. If your child is not able, keep them close and consider giving them a temporary tattoo, necklace or bracelet, or some other form of ID they won't lose during the event.
10. Based on your comfort level, you may want to identify visually your child's diagnosis (an autism awareness T-shirt or bracelet may do the trick). If your child is lost, acts out, or has other issues while in a crowd, this kind of identification may help others help her more effectively.

The Florida Autism Center is an Early Intervention treatment center dedicated to providing quality behavioral services that allow students to thrive in traditional educational settings and reduce their need for lifelong care and specialized services. You can reach them on the web at www.FLAutism.com or by phone at 866.610.0580.

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