

A Holiday Gift of Attitude

Written by Gayle Nobel

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This article will soon be published online. However, the holidays are here and I wanted to share it before they pass.

Your attitude determines your experience in life. This is especially true during the holidays. Living with autism comes with a tremendous set of challenges for the individual and the family. Pile the holiday season on top of that, and it can be quite a load.

The changes in routine and busyness of the season can add extra stress to a person with autism, taking some of the “happy” out of holidays. The ripple effect is felt by the entire family.

Tips for loving and living well with autism during the holiday season

1- Gratitude

Make gratitude your attitude. Isn't gratitude what our celebrations are supposed to be all about? Too easily, it gets tossed aside amongst the used wrapping paper. By default, people tend to focus on what's missing, what they don't have, or what's not right in their life and the world.

What if we viewed gratitude as more than just an emotion or feeling? If instead, we took gratitude on as a posture toward life, we might just experience how it could be tested and then strengthened through adversity. We don't have to wait for the feeling to magically come over us. We can decide to make gratitude a permanent stance toward life.

Practice gratitude. What do you love about your child? Yup, the one that just had a meltdown while holiday shopping at the mall. Put your attitude of gratitude into action. Gift yourself with a list of all the little things you love about that special person with autism in your life.

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2- Nourishment

No, not that tin of holiday cookies. People who live with individuals on the autism spectrum are in giving mode much of the time. Add the holidays to that mix, and it's easy to become depleted.

Take some time to fill your own well. It's tough to keep running the 'living with autism marathon' if you are dehydrated. Get your exercise in whatever form recharges and nourishes you. Gift yourself with a five minute slice of time each day to do whatever brings you peace and calms you down. Replenish yourself regularly and hydrate well.

3- Slow Down

What? When there are a million things on your to do list? Living with autism is a marathon, not a sprint. You're in this for the long haul during and after the holiday season. Besides, if you don't slow down, you might miss something. Spend time just being with your child out of therapy mode. Take some time to experience the gift of your child. Notice and treasure the moments of delight with the special child in your life.

Make time. Take time. Slowing down will enable you to be more mindful and attentive to your child. Slowing down to adjust for your child's slower processing speed will give you both the opportunity to experience more joy during this holiday season.

Indulge. Practice gratitude, nourishment and slowing down for the holidays. In fact, they will afford you the opportunity to experience more joy at any time of the year.