

Episode 8: Avoiding Harm for the Holidays

Overview

In this episode Jeanne (she/her) shares quotes from autistics about things they wish others understood about being autistic and the holidays, along with suggestions for both autistics and others on ways to reduce stress around issues such as changes to routine, new social environments, different food, and more.

Key Points:

- Food, social activities, and changes to routine are often sources of stress - by understanding the reasons behind behaviors and making accommodations as needed, we can make special occasions less stressful for everyone.
- Time: 31:18

Quotes:

"I hated parties before I was out of elementary school because they were loud, bright, overwarm, and just sensorily overwhelming. I wasn't trying to be rude or insincere when I fumbled verbal thank yous after getting presents, I just struggle to think and talk and people while in sensory overload." - Christine

"If you're autistic at any age, you are not being selfish if you need ear plugs or headphones, if you need to go for a walk or find a quiet space to breathe in." - Jeanne

"I'm unlikely to be very hungry if I'm eating at an unfamiliar time, off unfamiliar plates, potentially in uncomfortable clothing. I mostly managed this as a teenager by just not really eating during actual meal times and eating leftovers. It was very upsetting to

me that this upset my parents because I felt like I was making an effort by staying downstairs to socialize with people and waiting to eat until later, and they felt like I was just making more mess just because I felt like it." - Amanda

"Just because my face isn't doing what you expected it to do doesn't mean I don't like the gift you got me. Giving me a longed for item related to my special interest first thing and then being upset that I don't seem as engaged with the other gifts is counterproductive for both of us. I might really like those gifts too, but my focus has been captured by a particular thing" - Amanda

"Please stop insisting we must participate in your holiday parties if it makes me uncomfortable. Santa is absolutely not okay and you trying to make me sit with, talk to, or take photos with a stranger that has the authority to judge me as naughty is not okay" - "Ben" 13 yr old

"Yes, let people enjoy things, but also let people not enjoy things without having to disclose their trauma or diagnosis...you can't claim to be pro neurodiversity or autism and then complain about people being weird or cringe - most of us aren't bullied because of the label autism, we're bullied for liking something different, for talking differently, for being clumsy - the easy solution is to just not mock or belittle folks for harmless differences, regardless of diagnosis, ethnicity, religion, or anything else." - Jeanne

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