

# Unwrapping the Perfect Holidays!

We believe that the more engaged people are with the holiday season and with each other the less room there is for problems to develop. The holidays are a lot of work, without question, and they take tons of planning. By thinking through what kind of experience you would like individuals to have, we can begin to make a holiday that fits everyone. One of the expectations of the season is that we think about each other and then actively work to make each other happy. What a terrific job description to have, don't you think? A holiday coordinator of inclusion and happiness.

## 10 Ten ways we make the holidays a meaningful and inclusive experience!



### 1. Make it sensory

People with disabilities, like all of us, experience the world in a multitude of different ways. So, think about smells and sounds and sights - bake gingerbread, hang tinsel, find music that all enjoy.

### 2. Make it inclusive

It's a perfect time for people to share of each other's backgrounds and traditions. For some it's 'turkey', for another it's 'pasta', for others it's something else. Find out so all can share what they like. Inclusion should begin at home.



### 3. Make it active

Build gingerbread houses or decorate wreaths. Find ways that everyone can be involved, so no one is left out.

### 4. Make it ongoing

Consider taking the stress off by having smaller celebrations over several days, giving people parties and celebrations to look forward to over the whole season. This takes the pressure off having one day be the "big" day.

### 5. Make it giving

Taking time to organize and arrange something for someone else is a good way to build both character and self-esteem. Consider animals in shelters, children in hospitals or donating at the local food bank.

### 6. Make it a shared responsibility

Give loved ones the sense of pride and accomplishment of planning as much as possible - music, activities, food and the flow of the event.

### 7. Make it remembered

Think of giving each person a disposable camera before the holidays, helping them snap fun activities throughout the holidays.



### 8. Make it individualized

Remember choice is choice, and no means no. If someone doesn't want to participate in a certain activity, don't force them. Aggression is a really good way of saying, 'get me out of here'.

### 9. Make it 'no one left behind'

People with disabilities can be so easily forgotten in and among other activities. Seeing someone slumped in a wheelchair and alone while others are dancing is sadly too common. Make sure to keep your eyes open for those who are, as the song goes, 'so visible, easy to miss.'

### 10. Make it shared

Sit around with people and chat about the holidays, look at snapshots they show and write down in a holiday celebrations book to plan for next year.



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