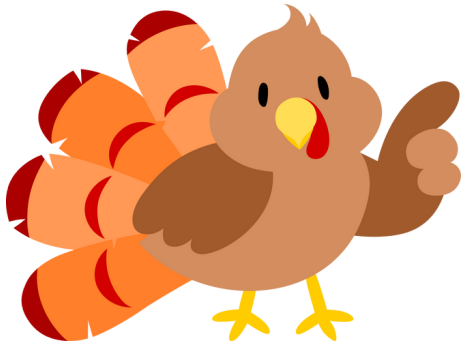




Thanksgiving

Sensory Friendly Tips



Thanksgiving is a wonderful time to gather with family and friends, but for children with autism or sensory issues, it can feel stressful and overwhelming.

Here are a few tips to help create a more sensory-friendly experience.

Prepare ahead -

- Use a simple visual schedule or social story (“First we drive to Aunt Kim’s, then we eat, then we play, then we go home.”)
- Show pictures of people they may see.

Stick with routine and practice new ones

- Practice saying “hi,” giving a wave, or using a communication card.
- Rehearse sitting at the table for short periods, taking a break, or requesting a preferred food.

Let them play a role

- Involving your child can help them feel connected and proud to participate. This could include setting the table or helping prepare food in some way.

Provide a sensory-friendly space

- Establish a designated, quiet area where your child can take a break when things feel overwhelming.

- Pack a “Sensory Toolkit”

Include:

- Noise-canceling headphones
- Fidgets
- Weighted lap pad
- Preferred snacks (in case the food is overwhelming)
- Chewelry or oral-sensory supports
- A comfort item (blanket, toy, stuffy)

Allow Clothing Flexibility

- Thanksgiving outfits can be itchy or restrictive.
- Let them wear comfortable clothing or bring soft layers.

Provide familiar food

- It's absolutely okay if they don't try new foods.
- Offer a "safe plate" of preferred items.
- Give the option to eat before or after the main meal if timing is stressful.

Protect Against Sensory Overload

Thanksgiving can be loud and chaotic.

Try:

- Lowering background music
- Limiting strong smells (candles, cooking, perfumes)
- Allowing headphones at the table if needed
- Giving warnings before transitions ("5 minutes until dinner!")

Celebrate their success

- Acknowledge steps like staying at the table for 3 minutes, greeting one person, or using a break card.
- Reinforce with specific praise or a preferred activity.

Be thankful for the way your child experiences the world! They contribute something meaningful and important just by being themselves!

