

As an independent Neurodivergent adult, the holidays can be stressful and tiring. Here are a few things that you can ask your family and friends to do that may help you feel more comfortable during holiday gatherings!



Ask for a copy of the schedule for any planned events to know ahead of time if anything changes. This may help you feel more prepared and comfortable.

Have family/friends explain expectations and unwritten rules beforehand. Remind them it's important to be patient if you have lots of questions about the event, even if you already asked them before. Hearing the same answers may help you feel more confident about the events.

If they don't remember to ask, talk to those you feel most comfortable with and tell them how to help or make you feel more at ease. If you feel embarrassed about needing more support, try speaking to friends or family privately.

Ask someone you trust and the event host(s) ahead of time to help you find a safe, quiet place (if possible) to recharge and/or calm down. This will be helpful if you become overwhelmed by the noise or people.

Have a "code word" in case you need help or want to talk to someone. When it comes to holiday events, you might be exposed to new lights, sounds, tastes, and textures that you are not used to. Knowing when you are having sensory overload and that you can step away from the group at any moment is important.

Remind others of your boundaries beforehand. It is okay to share your thoughts, feelings, and personal concerns with one person and ask them not to tell anyone else, especially if this information is sensitive to you.



Anxiety can make things more difficult when getting together with others. Knowing your limits or setting boundaries is important for maintaining your mental health. For example, you don't have to:

- Go to an event if you don't feel up to it.
- Be a part of every aspect of the event. For example, if you don't enjoy singing or playing games, you don't have to do either.
- Stay for the whole time. If you can't drive to the event separately, tell those you came with that you might want to leave early beforehand so that family/friends don't try to "guilt" you into staying. You are allowed to have limits.

Self-advocates share their struggles with the holidays and ways to manage:

[Autistic Adults Share What Helped \(and What Didn't\) Manage the Stress of the Holidays](#)