



INTEGRATED
AUTISM
THERAPIES

Parent
Holiday
Survival
Guide



*Tips and tricks for parents of children with ASD to
make the holidays a little easier.*



Articles Included

Importance of Schedules

Helpful Items to Pack

Food Sensitivities

Traveling Tips

Consider Extended Family

Meltdowns

Parent Self Care

Detox After Gatherings



Importance of Schedules

“It is very important for your child to have a schedule during the holidays. Schedules can provide predictability, which always reduces anxiety. Let your child know when and where you are going and what the order of activities will be. For example, tell your child that you are going to have a dinner, then open presents, then visit Santa and then come back home. Make sure your child has an idea of when you are leaving and when you will be returning home. Creating a visual schedule before the party or gathering can help your child know what to expect. If you think it will help, bring the visual schedule to the party so your child can refer to it throughout the night.”

Information from “10 Tips for Holiday Success by
Doreen Granpeesheh, PH. D., BCBA-D



Sample Schedule

HOLIDAY ROUTINE

FIRST THING	Get up Toilet Wash hands Breakfast Brush teeth Get dressed
MORNING	Morning activities
REST	Quiet activities (read a book, colour-in, have a rest, etc.)
LUNCH	Wash hands Lunch
AFTERNOON	Afternoon activities
REST	Quiet activities
EVENING	Wash hands Dinner Dessert Bath/Shower Quiet time
BED	Brush teeth Read a book Turn off light Go to sleep

Sample schedule from myhometruths.com

Helpful Items to pack



- photo book of family and friends and favorite places
- snow globe
- images of a dream location



- bubble wrap
- playlist of calming songs
- click pen
- chimes



- soft piece of cloth
- stress ball
- fidget toys
- silly putty
- blanket
- smooth rock
- textured cloth



- scented lotion
- calming essential oils, such as lavender or chamomile
- scratch-and-sniff stickers



- mints
- chewing gum
- hard candies

You could also include:

Favorite Items: book, stuffy, doll, toys

Distracting Items: puzzles, sketchpad, Sudoku puzzles

Positive Mindset Items: affirmation statements such as, "I am doing my best," or "I can do hard things," a list of funny jokes

List of Activities: go for a walk, watch a movie, take deep breaths, hum your favorite song, dance, get a hug

Emotional Awareness Tools: Feelings Chart, GLAD worksheet, journal for writing down feelings



Food Sensitivities

How to Safely Celebrate the Holidays with Food Sensitivities

Communicate Early

As soon as the event is scheduled, let the host know of your sensitivities so they have time to prepare.

Be Specific

Share the specific ingredients you are allergic to including language to watch for on packaging such as “Made in a facility that uses or processes X”

Explain the Severity

Mention the consequences of your food sensitivity to help them understand the importance of being cautious

Offer Solutions

Give simple suggestions to prevent cross contamination like using a separate cutting boards, pans and cooking/serving utensils for allergy ingredients.

Bring your own food

Be understanding that friends and family may not be familiar with food sensitivities. It may be best that you bring your own food so as to reduce anxiety of not knowing which food is safe.

Remember to express gratitude to your friends and family for their willingness to make adjustments for you. Small words of kindness go a long way during the stress of the holidays.



Non-Refrigerated Healthy Snacks For the Raod



Chomps Beef Sticks



Kirkland Organic Fruit
and Veggie Pouches



Fresh Fruit



Siete Chips



Lesser Evil Popcorn



Simple Mills
Sweet Thins

Traveling Tips



Plan Ahead

Before you go on a vacation, do your research. A good place to start is at IBCCES.org. This website lists numerous activities, at zoos, water parks, museums, and theme parks, and accommodation at hotels and resorts that are all Certified Autism Centers. This means that these facilities are dedicated to serving individuals with autism, that at least 80 percent of their staff members are trained and certified in the field of autism, and that they are committed to ongoing training in autism. Finding places like this can give peace of mind to your travel party. The website can also be a springboard for ideas if you are starting to plan a vacation.



Create a Storyboard

A storyboard is a visual representation of your trip. Include pictures to represent each day or each activity. Creating a storyboard, prior to traveling, is a great way to involve your family in the planning. It will help your child see when you will be leaving, where you will be staying and the sites you will be seeing on the trip. This will help your child feel comfortable with the planning and can alleviate some anxiety.



Navigating the Airlines

Some airports offer an opportunity to “test drive” the check-in process through what is known as the “flying rehearsal program.” You could consider this option if it will ease the stress on the actual day of travel.

If you are traveling by air, be sure to bring your child’s favorite comfort items, within the limits set by airlines. For instance, we always bring a favorite blanket and soft toy, books and activities. It is also helpful to have headphones and something to chew on while taking off and landing. You may wish to have new items and snacks to unwrap throughout travel. Of course, you will have more freedom if you are driving to your destination.

Talk to your pediatrician about options available to calm your child, if necessary. Always be sure to try out what is recommended prior to your flight as each person reacts differently to medications.



Stick to a Schedule

If you decide to travel by car to your vacation spot or to take a scenic roadtrip, it’s important to stick to a schedule. This is another opportunity to make a storyboard of the journey so that your child knows what to expect. My advice is to keep the schedule reasonable and doable for all those traveling in the car. When researching your vacation, be sure to add all the things you want to do to the agenda, but don’t overdo it. This is not the time to add extra stops that were not on the storyboard. Be sure to plan bathroom and snack breaks. Bring entertainment that is suitable for your child in the car, as well as snacks, and items that bring comfort. Don’t try to do too much in one day. For everyone’s sake, keep the driving reasonable, and take a break at a park or other place where you and your child can relax and play before hitting the road again.



Booking a Hotel Room

If you decide to make your own hotel or resort reservations, prepare a list in advance of the items you require in your room and at the resort. Go through a typical day at home noting things that may not be readily available when you are on vacation. You may be surprised by how many adjustments you make, and will need to make, on your trip. Once you have the list in hand, you can request these items when you make your reservation. If the hotel cannot meet all your needs, staff may be able to suggest how to get the items from outside vendors. If you plan to utilize the resort’s childcare services, ask about the training of the on-site childcare staff. Make sure they are certified to work with your autistic child. If they cannot accommodate you, it is better to find out before you arrive at the resort.



Start With a Short Trip

Taking a short trip as a practice run may be beneficial for your family. Follow the same steps as you would for a longer trip: create a storyboard, bring comfort items and stick to a schedule. A shorter trip will give you an idea of the kinds of things to plan for on a longer trip.



Plan According to Your Child's Interests

Since you know your child best, consider what activities might be suitable. If your child prefers a quiet environment, plan on visiting places that are calm, such as museums or outdoor exploration centers. If your child loves excitement and adventure, plan a trip to a waterpark or an amusement park. Keep in mind how long your child can reasonably enjoy these outings and make time for breaks, naps, if needed, and food.

As a Certified Autism Travel Professional, I update my content and renew my certification annually. This is how I help my clients find the best travel destination for their family's needs, whether it's a cruise, a theme park or some other destination. I assist my clients in making sure that they are well taken care of and that all of their concerns are met. This ensures that when they arrive at their destination, they can have a worry-free time.



Andrea Auger is a Travel Advisor specializing in Disney, Universal, Hawaii, Alaska, cruises and more. She is a Certified Autism Travel Professional and is also Special Needs at Sea certified. Andrea is a homeschooling mom and a senior dog rescuer.

Facebook: [Facebook.com/andrealynnauger](https://www.facebook.com/andrealynnauger)
Instagram: [Instagram.com/andreaaugertravel](https://www.instagram.com/andreaaugertravel)
Websites:
agents.travelleaders.com/Andrea
www.vacationsbyandrea.com

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Consider Extended Family

“Not all extended family members understand the daily challenges you face when raising an autistic child. They may not recognize or accept that your child has autism, and may have formed an opinion about your child’s behavior or your parenting style. In my experience, one of the best ways to address this issue is to educate misinformed family members. Parents can do this by sharing literature or videos on autism from an expert. Family members are often more willing to listen and learn if the information comes from an expert.

Sensory issues can also be difficult for extended family members to understand. Grandma might not understand why your child isn’t comfortable giving her a hug, and others might question if your parenting has played a part in your child’s selective eating. As difficult as it might be for extended family members to understand these differences about your child, it is incumbent on them to learn these things about your child. At some point as a parent, you learned that your child prefers a high five to a hug, and that even the smell of broccoli can cause a shutdown. The more you encourage grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins to learn about and accept these differences, the more you can begin to count on these individuals to help produce a welcoming environment for your child.”

Information from “10 Tips for Holiday Success by Doreen Granpeesheh, PH. D., BCBA-D



Meltdowns



The 101 Guide to Handling Autistic Meltdowns in Public

Why do meltdowns occur?

- 1 Overstimulation in the environment.
- 2 Capacity to cope has been worn out.

Meltdowns can be in different forms like crying, screaming and even shutting down.

While it may seem like a very irrational response, it is in fact a very logical one. **The event and the response is never unrelated.**

Friendly Advice:

When your child is having a meltdown in public, don't be embarrassed. It can be a difficult situation for you, but it is even harder on the child. Your main goal as a parent should be to identify the stressors and triggers so you can prevent them in a public setting.



<https://otsimo.com/en/>

Best ways to handle a meltdown when you are in public:

1 Having a calm and nonchalant attitude.



2 Have some sensory toys on hand. Things like noise cancelling headphones, stress toys and slime can help calm the child down.



3 Step outside of the place you are in. A change of location with less stimulation helps calm the child down.



Focus on your child and not the people around. Your child needs you the most right now.

5



Don't resort to punishment. Remember the meltdown is not in your child's control, which is why you need to give them the freedom to vent out what they are feeling.

4



Parent Self Care

Seven Simple and Quick Self-care Ideas

These may not be what you expected. Choose something *really* simple and try it out! It is important that you choose the activity yourself, that you feel nourished by it, and that you acknowledge you are doing something nice for yourself. You deserve this!



FULL BODY YAWN

Reach up, stretch like a cat and pretend to yawn until you actually do yawn. Get your whole body involved in the yawn. Exaggerate. When we're under threat, we don't yawn. Yawning signals to your body that you are safe enough to relax. You have just given your nervous system a tune up by activating your vagus nerve and stimulating the *'attend and befriend'* response.



HUG

I know it sounds so simple. Give and receive a hug from someone who also wants one. You can do it yourself by wrapping your arms around yourself and squeezing, or by rolling yourself up firmly in a blanket. Breathe it in, and be in the moment. Oxytocin, a feel-good hormone, is released when we hug. When my son was younger, I got my hugs elsewhere. Now, he has become a master of hugs!



EXERCISE FOR FIVE MINUTES

Challenge your kid to a plank (push up, jumping jack, or burpee) contest. Let your child win. Get outside for fresh air. When I'm out of the habit of exercising, it is the last thing I want to do. Afterwards, however, I have more energy and enthusiasm.



SELF-MASSAGE

Roll your foot on a tennis ball or rubber ball while sitting or standing. I have a ball under my foot as I sit at my desk writing this. Use one hand to rub the other, then switch. Reach across to squeeze the opposite side of your neck and shoulder. Crossing the midline of your body is said to be good for coordination between the hemispheres of your brain.



BALANCED BREATH

Put a hand on your heart and one on your belly. Watch the flow of your breath as it goes in and out. Imagine fogging a mirror with your slow exhalation. Begin counting to five as you inhale, and five as you exhale. Everyone's mind wanders. Be patient with your mind as you guide it back to your breath.



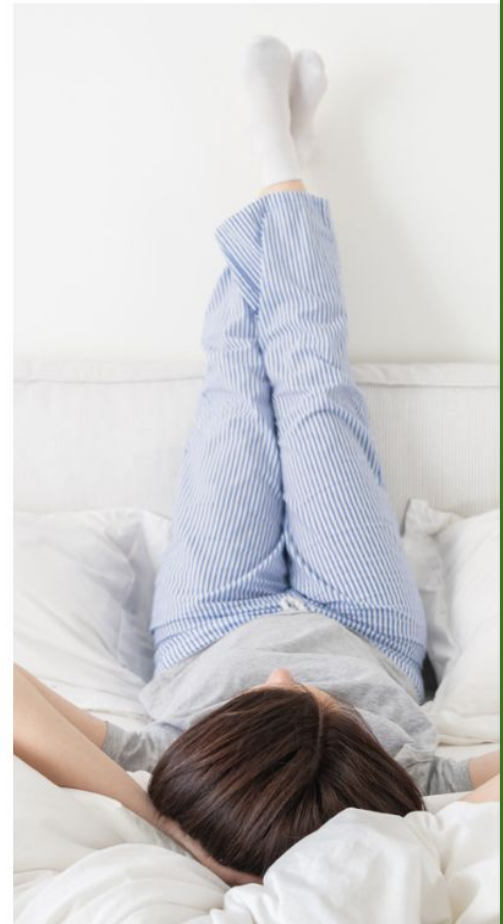
MAJESTIC WALK

When you go out for a walk, feel as if you are walking a red carpet. Let your arms swing freely, and saunter majestically with easygoing confidence. Smile at the paparazzi. Get your whole body involved in the action of enjoying the walk. Let all your senses really appreciate your surroundings, as if surveying your kingdom, no matter where you are. Soak in the moment.



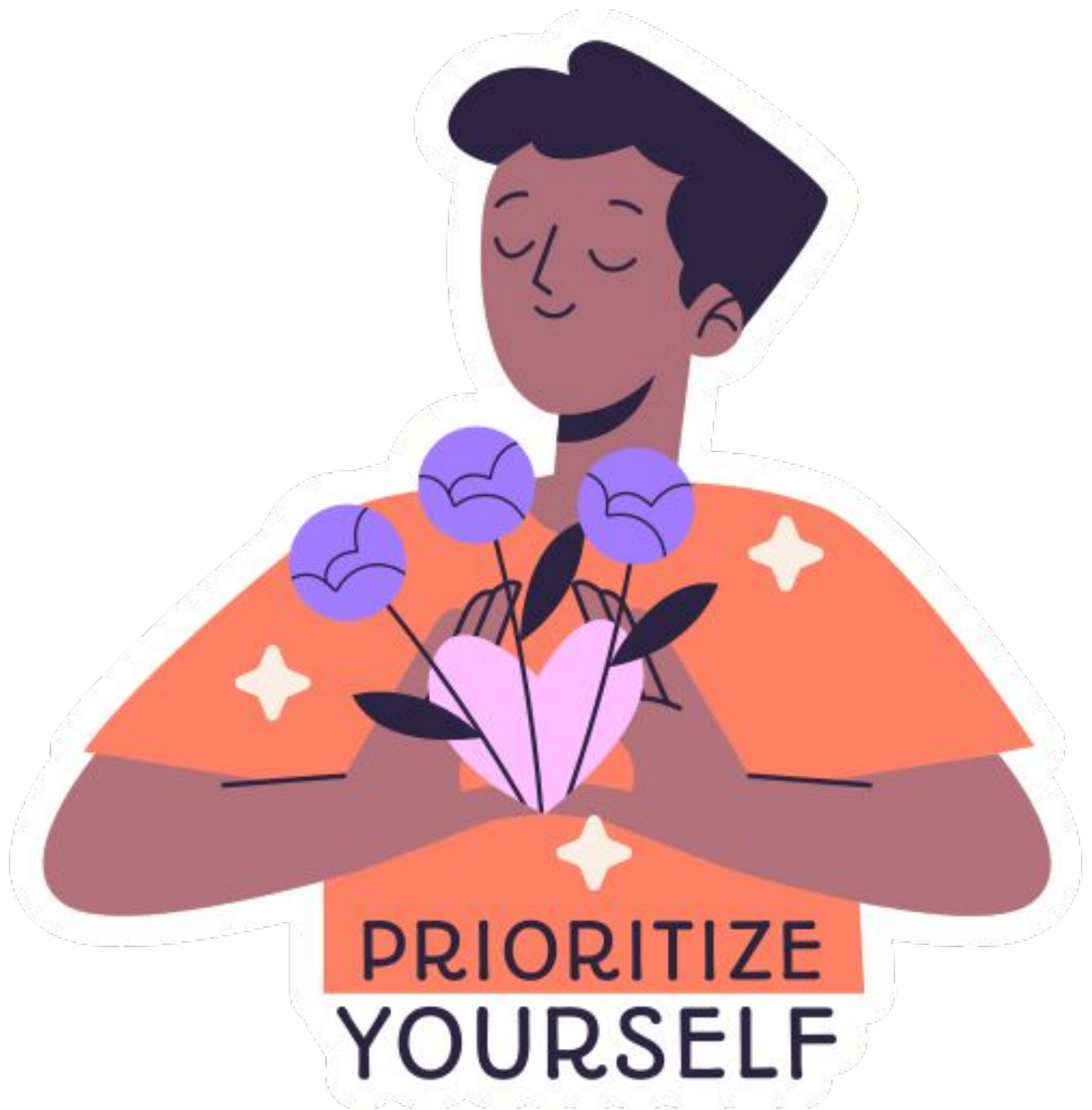
LEGS UP THE WALL

This is my go-to restorative yoga pose for when I'm so exhausted that I can't go on, but I have to. Set a timer so you don't have to check the clock. Find a wall, couch or chair. Lie on the floor and elevate your legs above your hips. Let them bend. Adjust the position until you're really comfortable. Cover yourself and make sure your back is warm and cozy. You can use a thin pillow under your hips or head. Allow gravity to support you and blood flow to nourish your organs in this extremely gentle inversion. Roll to your side when the timer goes off, and take your time standing up.



“The biggest mood-boosting, stress-busting effects came from five minute doses of exercise... Everyone asks, ‘What kind of exercise is best?’ to which I respond, ‘What kind will you actually do?’”

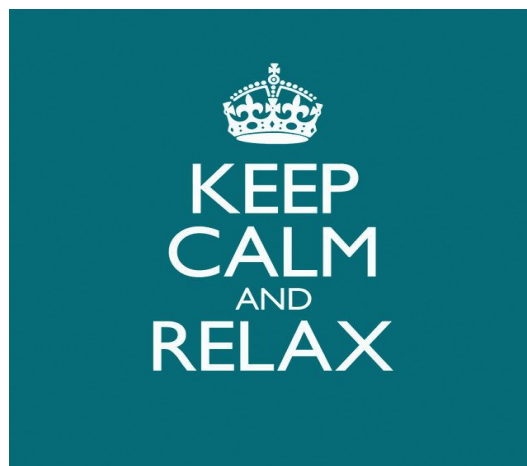
— Kelly McGonigal, *The Willpower Instinct*



Detox after Gatherings

“Sometimes our children benefit from a peaceful and calming activity after an event or activity. These activities may help them self-regulate after the extra noise and stimulation of the party. They could include watching a movie, reading a book, taking a nature walk, listening to music or something else calming to help the child decompress from the extra stimulation.”

Information from “10 Tips for Holiday Success by Doreen Granpeesheh, PH. D., BCBA-D

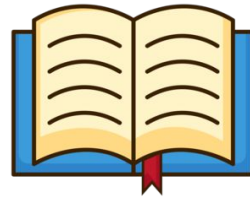


Decompression List

Watch a movie



Read a book



Take a nature walk

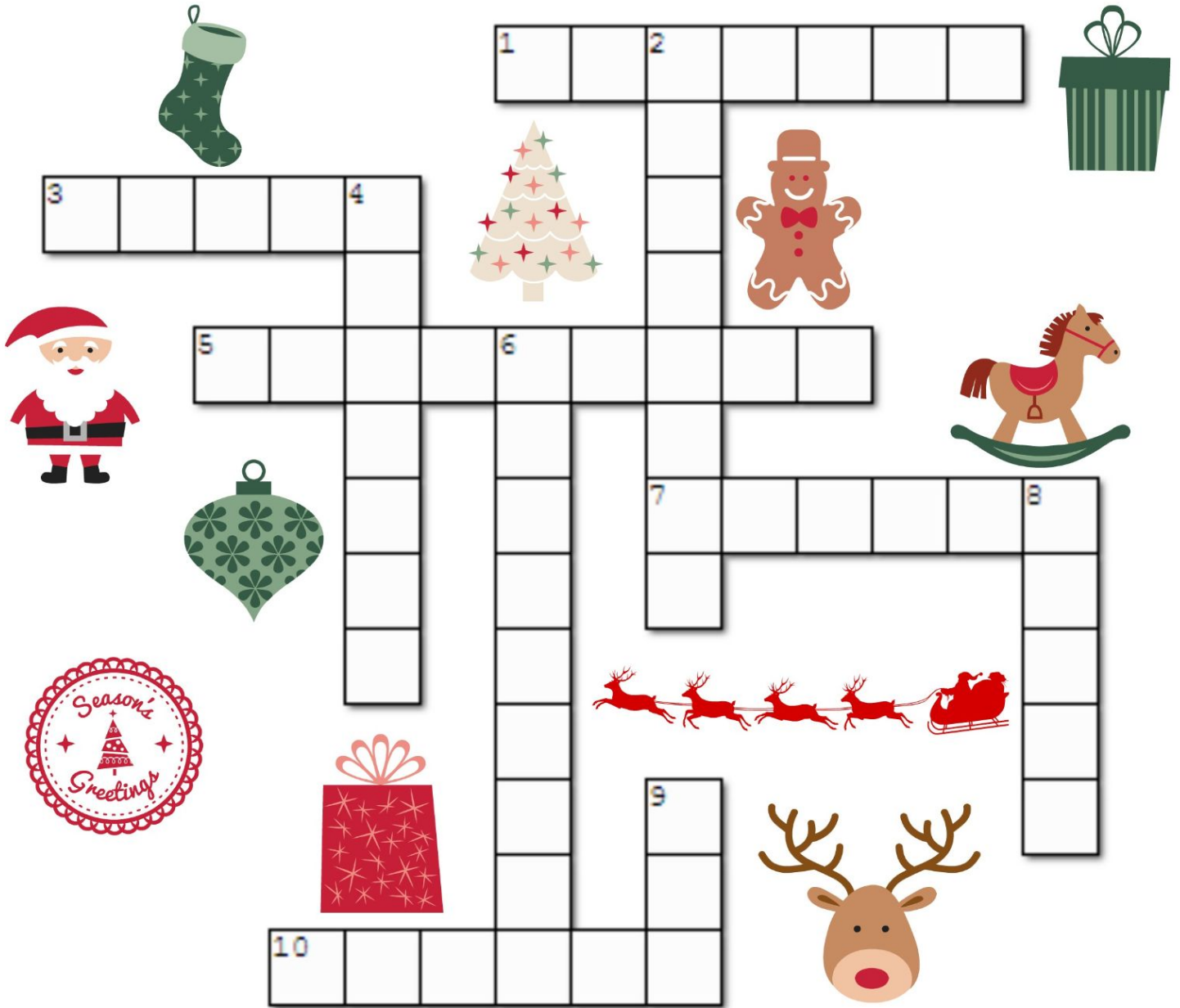


Listen to music



CHRISTMAS CROSSWORD PUZZLE

USE THE CLUES TO COMPLETE THE CROSSWORD PUZZLE.



Across

1. One of Santa's Reindeer
3. Santa's Helpers
5. December 25th is _____.
7. Christmas Drink
10. The name of a popular snowman.

Down

2. Christmas Month
4. He hates Christmas!
6. You hang them by the chimney.
8. On Christmas morning we unwrap our _____.
9. ___ to the world!





Winter Wordsearch



K N A M W O N S T N X O T F E
K O W I N T E R E C O C O A L
P I C I C L E I Z R R R B K G
C H M B W M I T T E N S M W I
H S G H W S Z I W D Y F E A L
T G H Q R A K E N E Z O R F A
O L X O D S S P R U C E I S U
B O J E V C A R D I N A L N A
O V R N L E B G O T A H I O R
G E T C H I L L Y G Z O M W D
G S P C D O K T Z G Q L K F B
A C T S K A T E X S C L D L S
N I Z M M Y W F E X D Y E A H
C W N L U T G Y N S O A L K B
S D O Q V L Q K H W M Q S E A

WINTER
SNOWFLAKE
SNOWMAN
ICICLE
SPRUCE
HOLLY
CARDINAL
FROZEN
BRRR
CHILLY
SLED
GLOVES
HAT
SKATE
SKI
TOBOGGAN
COCOA
SHOVEL
MITTENS

Christmas Sudoku

Game

Fill the grids so that each horizontal row, vertical column and subgrid contains each letter exactly once.



ADVENT

	T	D			
		A	T	N	
	E				N
A		N			T
		E		T	
V	N			A	

JOYFUL

Y		O			
	J			O	Y
				U	F
	F			Y	L
U	Y			J	
L			T	F	



SLEIGH

E		G			
	L	I	H		
I				H	
			S	L	I
			G	I	
	I	H	L		

WINTER

	I		R		
R		T			I
E	N				
T				N	E
I			E	R	
		E	T	I	



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