

Accepting the Spectrum

A monthly newsletter sharing information and support for families, caregivers, and friends of children on the Autism Spectrum

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Fireworks are a holiday staple for the Fourth of July and occur throughout the month. While many families love to watch fireworks together, these loud explosions can actually cause sensory overload for some children with autism. Instead of avoiding these festivities as a whole, there are many tools that can help your child prepare for these festivities and still enjoy all that comes with these celebrations!

- Noise-cancelling head phones are a great tool that can help your child feel more comfortable when watching fireworks. You can discuss with your child when it is a good time to put them on and how long they will be wearing them for.
- When watching fireworks, typically there are large crowds. These large crowds can become overwhelming for some children with autism. It can be beneficial to bring your child to a park or a playground where it is usually more crowded to become familiar with being around others. This is also a great opportunity to practice following safety and staying close by to an adult.
- Another great tool to prepare your child for new experiences is through social stories. Social stories are short narratives that create an outline of what will happen when watching fireworks. You can include pictures and short descriptions that can help your child to understand what to expect.



- Prepare for an upcoming firework show by watching a video of fireworks with your child. This exposes your child to unfamiliar sounds and become comfortable with what is to come.



Upcoming Autism Friendly Event:



Agency News:

- Virtual Parent/Caregiver Group will be scheduled for July 11th from 1-2pm
- Wednesday, July 24th town of New Britain Annual Ability Walk and Roll Event from 5-7pm



Lisa's Coaching Corner:

Hello Families! My name is Lisa Candra. I am an Autism sibling, solo mother of Ben, a 16 year old with Autism, and a certified life and grief coach for Autism Moms. In each newsletter, I will share with you wisdom and strategies I have learned from a life-time of living alongside Autism. If you have any suggestions or requests, please send them to me at lisa@theautismmomcoach.com.

XOXO

Lisa

<https://linktr.ee/LisaCandra>

Getting to Know Your Summer GOMO:

When Ben was 4, I was so excited to take him to the community splash pool. I had prepared him for weeks: Driving by the pool while it was uncovered. Watching it get filled with water. Buying pool tools. On opening day, we bolted to the splash pool as fast as we could. For 20 minutes, Ben was in heaven dancing under the waterfall. It was going so well, until it wasn't. The dancing was replaced by yelling and screaming when Ben tried to run to the big pool and I had to tell him "No." For most kids, this would have been a simple redirect. Not for Ben. I removed him from the area and tried to calm him with my usual tricks, but he was showing no signs of simmering down. So, after 20 minutes of being at the community pool, we were headed home. I was crushed. This is not fair. It should not be this hard. Everyone else is having a good time.

This is what I call GOMO: "Grief of Missing Out". The kind of grief so many of us feel when our children struggle with activities that seem effortless for others. While GOMO can arise anytime, it hits especially hard during the summer months. That is because for most families, summers are all about spontaneous, unstructured, and sensory filled activities. In other words, all the thing our kids struggle with! So it is not surprising that summer can be a land mine of GOMO-inducing experiences. So what to do? Here is what I suggest. First, get to know your GOMO. Grief is like a shape-shifter. It's not limited to sadness and tears. In fact, grief is just as likely to be expressed as anger at the people who "don't get it", frustration with our child, resentment of other kids and families, or fear of the future. That is why it is important for you to get familiar with how your grief shows up.

Here are 3 questions to get your started with getting to know your grief. When does it show up? How does it show up? Where do you feel it? Second, validate your feelings without judgment. Now that you are becoming familiar with your GOMO feelings, it is time to validate them, without judgment. This means giving yourself words of support. Some tips: This sounds like: "Of course I feel sad/angry/jealous - this is normal." This does NOT sound like: "I should be grateful"/"other people have it worse"/"this is my fault."

Finally, allow yourself to feel your emotions. Your emotions can't hurt you. By taking deep breaths in and out, you can support yourself as you let the emotions move through you. While GOMO work is not glamorous, it is so important. That is because the better you are at recognizing, validating and allowing your emotions, the more capacity you will have to create summer activities and traditions that works for your child and family.