Twitter Thread by Pete 'stay' Wharmby 'the fireplace'



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How to help the #autistic people in your life get through Christmas - a practical thread of advice.

Please read and share!

(This is based on my own experiences of being autistic)

#autism #christmas

1. Give #autistic people an easy escape route they know they can take without judgement - knowing you can dash off to recharge without being questioned can help so much!

2. Don't play Christmas music really loudly around the house. No one needs that anyway but if you must, make it not too intrusive as it can be difficult for #autistic people to handle. Christmas music is *so* 'busy'!

3. Don't expect clear and unambiguous response to Christmas presents when opened. Many #autistic people struggle to show the appropriate emotional reaction, and are also terrified of making you feel bad. We show appreciation in our own way.

4. Don't forget #autistic friends and relatives may not be as excited about meeting up with family members as you are. There is likely a lot of anxiety there, especially this year. Be mindful of this and don't force it.

5. Make sure at least one room is quiet and non-decorated as a kind of cool-off room from all the noise, social stuff and colour of Christmas. All that can be an #autistic person's sensory nightmare.

6. Let your #autistic kids (and adults) play with their new stuff as soon as possible. They may have been obsessing over it for months and telling them they can't open their lego til after dinner is bloody cruel...

7. Don't make social interactions, like games, singalongs or whatever, compulsory for your #autistic friends. We may well join in but being compelled to is really unpleasant and can cause meltdown.

8. If a meltdown does occur, and sadly it is pretty likely as Christmas is bloody intense, let #autistic folks escape without fuss or comment. Do not criticise them fof their meltdown. Do be kind and supportive on their return.

9. Let your #autistic friends and relatives bring their favourite new little toy to the dinner table with them, to fiddle with and to help ground them. Honestly, this helps so so much. I like to have a LEGO minifigure.

10. Talk to your #autistic friends and relatives about their big interests, especially if their gifts are linked to them. I expect to tslk to The Child about Pokemon a *lot* on Friday.

11. If you're in a lockdown area and you're not seeing extended family, allow the #autistic one in you'd life to make the most of this opportunity and do not make them feel bad for enjoying the relative lack of stress.

12. Do ask #autistic friends and relatives to help with dinner, but with clear, unambiguous instructions. Honestly - make it really clear what we should do - don't leave it to us to do on our initiative...

13. If you have #autistic relatives alone at Christmas, message them. Only ring them if they're OK with phone calls. But do say hello!

14. Don't force your #autistic friends and relatives to wear strange things at Christmas, like thick woolly jumpers or paper crowns. Nothing makes me more unhappy than wearing an ill-fitting paper crown that my scalp will not recognise as a friend. Hate them.

15. Don't make an #autistic or #ADHD person sit through a film 'just because' it's Christmas. please.

16. DO NOT moan at me on this thread that #autistic people just want excuses to not do stuff. That's a cruel and intensely mean spirited take.

17. Make sure #autistic friends and relatives know where all your amenities are. Nothing is worse than visiting a house snd being too scared to find the toilet,or not knowing where the towels are.

18. Recognise that not all of these tips will be applicable as there's a lot of variety in the autistic population!

If you appreciate my stuff and advocacy, such as it is, I really do appreciate a bit of financial support, especially these days. Thank you

https://t.co/qonxXX3C91

19. Many #autistic people don't actually like surprises - sometimes the best bet is to be open about what you're doing/gifting.

20. You may have to let an #autistic friend or relative follow their normal routine on Christmas day, even if it doesn't fit perfectly with your expectation if what Christmas day should be like. Don't be stubborn.

21. If you have a 'running order' of the day, share it with your #autistic guests - they will really appreciate the heads up. Give warning of changes to new activities.

22. Enforced fun of any kind is pretty grim but in my experience #autistic folk are very resistant to it. Avoid.

23. Die Hard is a Christmas movie.

24. And so is Iron Man 3 (in fact its the only thing that film has going for it).

25. Don't make #autistic people feel bad if they've forgotten to wrap a present or something like that. Executive dysfunction is a big deal!

26. #autistic people may find photographs difficult, as we believe they steal our souls. Only joking, we autistic folk don't have souls.

But seriously, the forces jollity or need to smile if you're flat-affect can be very unpleasant.

27. If an #autistic person makes an ill advised joke over Christmas Dinner, take it in good faith - don't assume they're trying to offend. See above tweet.

28. Don't force an #autistic friend or relative to eat unfamiliar food 'just because its Christmas'.

ie Christmas pudding, nuts, Stilton, etc