



## PARENT TO PARENT NEWSLETTER

Island County

December 2015

# Avoid Holiday Meltdowns With These Strategies

While the words “stress-free” and “the holidays” don’t often go together, all of us at Brain Balance Achievement Centers want kids to enjoy this special time of year without meltdowns. The following tips and strategies can help everyone enjoy this busy and often overwhelming season... especially those with neuro-behavioral disorders like ADHD and Asperger Syndrome. Try these strategies and help every member of your family enjoy this wonderful time of year!

### 1. Give your child a schedule of events for special activities, particularly on days with lots of transitions.

Whether it’s a written schedule or one with pictures for younger kids, your child will feel calmer and safer knowing what is coming up. Discuss the schedule regularly and provide info for each event. For example, let your child know which events will take place outside and which will be loud or crowded. Sometimes just knowing what’s next can help children with behavioral and sensory issues feel less anxiety.

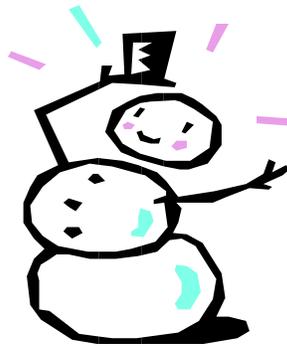
### 2. Have a code word your child can use if he or she feels overwhelmed and needs a break.

Assure your child if he or she uses the code word, you will respond right away. Again, giving children some control during activities that may be over-

stimulating for them will reduce anxiety, and help them stay calm and organized.

### 3. Before you leave for holiday parties, parades, or other fun events, have a quick family meeting so your whole family knows how long you plan to stay and how you expect them to behave.

This will benefit neuro-typical children as well, since any child can get overwhelmed with the excitement of the holidays. Continue to make your child’s sleep schedule a priority, even in the midst of so many special events.



### 4. Children with significant sensory sensitives may require a little extra planning to enjoy holiday festivities.

For example, you may need to bring along ear plugs if you will be in a noisy environment or sensory fidgets if the child is expected to sit still. For sensitive kids who need to wear dress clothes for events, bring along some

soft clothes for them to change into as soon as possible. Be prepared by knowing your child’s specific limitations and how you will handle them if the need arises. Don’t wait for the meltdown to begin.

### 5. If your children have food sensitives or allergies that prevent them from eating holiday treats, plan ahead to offer alternatives like all-natural candy or a gluten-free treat from home.

Children with neuro-behavioral disorders often already feel different, so be sure to include them in as many holiday festivities as possible.

### 6. If your child is easily overstimulated, limit holiday decorations in your home.

Too many twinkling lights combined with smells from the kitchen and other holidays distractions, while enjoyable to most, can be too much for children with Asperger Syndrome, ADHD, or sensory disorders. Allow children to help you decorate for the holidays so they are involved in the changes that take place in their comforting environment.

The holiday season doesn’t have to be a stressful time of year for your child with a learning or behavioral disorder! We hope these tips help your whole family enjoy this fun time of year.

Written by: Brain Balance Centers

**Want to Stay Up-To-Date on Events, Articles, Research?** Sign up for our Newsletter mailing. There is a newsletter every month. The quarterly newsletter is packed with resources (local, state and federal), events, and up to date research/articles. The monthly newsletter is events and tips. Our Facebook page it updated almost daily with articles, events and tips on raising a child with special needs or supporting an adult with special needs.



PARENT to PARENT



[www.facebook.com/islandcountyparent2parent](http://www.facebook.com/islandcountyparent2parent)

Tiffany Wheeler-Thompson, Parent to Parent Coordinator (360)632-7539 [t.wheeler-thompson@co.island.wa.us](mailto:t.wheeler-thompson@co.island.wa.us)

## Activities & Events

**December 2—Internet and Social Media Safety**, 6-7:30pm, OHHS Student Union Building Free, informative event for parents to learn practical tips on protecting their children on the internet. December 2, 6-7:30pm at the Oak Harbor High School Student Union Building. For more information, call 279-5000 or visit ohsd.net.

**December 5—Holly Jolly Christmas Parade:** Downtown Langley 11:00am

**December 5—Greening of Coupeville:** Parade, Santa and Caroling 4:00pm

**December 5—Lighted Boat Parade:** Oak Harbor Yacht Club (viewing in Coupeville and Oak Harbor)

**December 5—Teddy Bear Breakfast:** Oak Harbor Elks Lodge [www.bbbsislandcounty.org](http://www.bbbsislandcounty.org) for tickets. Seating at 9am and 10:30am. Bring a stuffed animal to donate to a child in crisis. Benefits Big Brothers/Big Sisters.

**December 5—Lighting of the Tree:** Downtown Oak Harbor Choirs at 4pm, tree lighting at 5:30pm

**December 6—Festival of Trees:** Enjoy a walk through beautifully decorated Christmas trees, indoors. Elks Lodge

**December 7—Langley Holiday Parade:** 11:00 am

**December 31—New Year's Eve Fireworks:** Oak Harbor Windjammer Park 9:00pm

## Whidbey's Favorite Christmas Light Displays

**South End: The Beck Family Christmas Light Show**

6504 Robin Lane, Clinton. Drive through Christmas light show. 6-9pm daily. Ends December 31st

**North End: Fields of Holiday Lights**

Corner of Crescent Harbor Road and Taylor Road, Oak Harbor. Open nightly through December 31st.

## Santa Sightings

**Greenbank Farm:** December 6, 13 & 20. 11am-1:00pm

**Pacific Winds Farms:** 2870 Torpedo Rd, Oak Harbor. Mrs. Claus December 6,7,13,14,20& 21. Time: 12-4:00pm

## Upcoming Conferences & Advocacy

**Family Advocacy Day:**

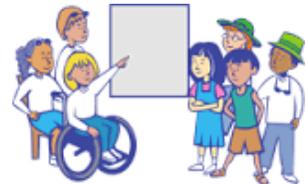
February 17, 2016 Olympia, WA [www.arcwa.org/takeaction/washingtonstate/advocacy\\_day](http://www.arcwa.org/takeaction/washingtonstate/advocacy_day)

**Statewide Transition Conference:**

March 29, 2016 Everett, WA [www.gowise.org](http://www.gowise.org)

**Community Summit on Developmental Disabilities:**

June 14-16, 2016 Wenatchee, WA [www.gowise.org](http://www.gowise.org)



Questions: Call Mike Etzell (360)678-7883

## Did you know we have 4 different support groups on Whidbey Island?

**PAMI:** Grupo de apoyo para familias de niños con necesidades especiales, Día: Primer Martes de cada Mes  
Hora: 7:00-8:30 pm Lugar: Oficina de Aptitude Habilitation Services. Si tiene alguna pregunta, por favor comuníquese con: Laiza Ramos (787)529-6788 or [pamiespanol@gmail.com](mailto:pamiespanol@gmail.com)

**South Whidbey Support Group:** All parents & caregivers of special needs children, of any age, are welcome. Located at South Whidbey Elementary, Resource Center. Second Friday of each month. Call 331-0484 to RSVP for free childcare or questions.

**Parent Support Partnership:** Who: All Parents and Caregivers. Childcare and Dinner Provided with RSVP  
South Whidbey Elementary Campus, Family Resource Center. Second Tuesday Every Month @6:00pm  
Call (360)221-6808xt 4321 to RSVP or ask questions

**Friends Helping Friends:** A support group for any and all who are raising a child with special needs. Every third Thursday of the month. 7-8:30pm. Located at Aptitude Habilitation Services, Oak Harbor. Childcare is provided, contact [smartin@aptitudeservices.com](mailto:smartin@aptitudeservices.com)

**DISCLAIMER** This event/activity is NOT being sponsored by the school district, and the district assumes no responsibility for the conduct or safety of the event/activity. In consideration for the privilege to distribute these materials, the South Whidbey School District shall be held harmless from any cause of action, claim, or petition filed in any court or administrative tribunal arising out of the distribution of these materials, including all costs, attorney's fees, and judgements or awards.