



Summer is upon us which means time spent with family and friends at the beach, barbecues, and parks. While we all look forward to the fun that summer often brings, it also means many of our daily schedules and routines can be disrupted. This disruption can be particularly challenging for children on the Autism Spectrum Disorder. Below are a few tips to consider when preparing your child for summer activities.

**1. Prime your child.** Prepare your child for potential changes in their routine in advance. This can be done in many different ways from explaining verbally that there will be a change(s) in their routine to creating a visual schedule or checklist that lets them know what will happen during their day.

**2. Practice.** Consider taking your child to a new location before the big event (whether that be a family barbecue or watching fireworks on the 4th of July). This will give your child the ability to become familiar with a location and may calm their fears and anxiety during the actual event.

**3. Be mindful of peak times.** Many of us spend time at theme parks, water parks, museums and other potentially crowded locations during the summer months. Contact the locations you are planning to visit to find out what their peak hours are during the day. This will help you to plan your day in such a way that you are able to avoid the busier times.

**4. Plan for overwhelming situations.** Many summer events bring along with them new sights, smells, and sounds. Individuals on the Autism spectrum may find these sights, smells and sounds to be overwhelming. Be prepared by providing your child access to preferred items that may be soothing or engaging, known food choices, and the ability to escape particularly overwhelming situations such as fireworks. Providing your child with access to noise reduction earphones or watching fireworks from a distance may be very helpful.

**5. Stay calm!** Maintaining a calm demeanor during unexpected events (large crowds, rain, rowdy guests) will help to ease the anxiety your child may be feeling in the situation.

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