



Evidence -Based consulting

From the desk of the
Tumbleweed consultant

Happy Holidays!

I really love the holidays but my first day back to work after Thanksgiving break, was not a smooth one. Logic would suggest that after a couple days of eating amazing food and hanging out with the family, I would be reenergized. Instead I felt, hmmm..... dazed. I kept checking my calendar and triple checking my "to do" list. Any changes in a schedule, even awesome ones, can increase anxiety. Add into that the over stimulation of twinkling lights, crowds of people, pine scented everything, and odd versions of "Deck the Halls" in every store. Honestly, did Twisted Sister really need to make a Christmas album?

Here are a few tips for maintaining classroom sanity and using visual strategies to get through the holidays:

- Be aware of the impact holiday decorations, sounds and smells may have on your student. You may need to schedule extra breaks for time to "chill out" and get away.
- Give the student a calendar that indicates special events, shortened school days and vacation days. Encourage parents to add their own information to the calendar. Especially if they will be traveling.
- Indicate ANY change in class routine on the student's schedule. Even the fun changes. Don't assume that because you have been talking about the class party all week, your student with ASD understands the impact it will have on his own routine.
- Prime or pre-teach the student's schedule so that they will be prepared for changes.
- Create social narratives or videos that model appropriate social skills or that simply prepare students for holiday changes.
- Provide written scripts to help the student practice seasonal phrases and conversation topics with peers and staff. Use the student's calendar to indicate the time frame these topics end. (i.e. we stop asking what someone is doing for Christmas after December 25th)
- Plan social skills lessons around appropriate holiday behavior (i.e. saying "thank you" even for a gift you don't like)
- Don't forget the 5 point scale! It is a great way to teach coping strategies for special situations

This month's featured article is one written by Kari Dunn Buron, creator of the [Incredible 5 point Scale](#). Kari discusses using a "word" scale. For more information on the [Incredible 5 point scales](#), check out our website at kansasasd.com. Our own incredible Katie Thomas put together a webinar for you on the basics of using the scale. To read this month's featured article go to: <http://www.education.com/reference/article/five-point-scale-asperger-teaching/>

Happy reading and safe travels,
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