



PODCAST FREEBIE

Birthday Party Survival Guide

Birthday parties can be overstimulating for a variety of reasons.
Use this guide to help create a fun, positive experience!

Episode # 177

A Child May Become Over-Stimulated By:

1 VISUAL INPUT

Lots of new visual input. Lots of people moving around, lights and different objects to visually take in and process.

2 AUDITORY INPUT

Lots of noise. People talking, children laughing and yelling and crying. The noise is especially loud if at an event / party place vs. outdoors.

3 TACTILE INPUT

Lots of people means lots of physical contact. Plus new tactile input from different objects in the environment.

4 GUSTATORY & OLFACTORY INPUT

Lots of smells - especially if at an event / party place. New and different foods means new and different smells and tastes.

5 VESTIBULAR & PROPRIOCEPTIVE INPUT

Depending on the location, there may be trampolines, bounce houses, pools, new climbing structures, etc.

6 INTEROCEPTION

Lots of challenges when in a new environment - mealtime routine is different, different bathroom setting, challenges with emotions, etc.



Tips, Tricks, & Strategies:

1 TALK TO THE PARTY HOSTS

Let the hosts of the party know that you may need to leave the party early. Explain that you and your child want to attend the party, but that it may be overstimulating and you will stay as long as is feasible.

2 BRING SENSORY TOOLS

- This can look like calming items that you keep in the car - you can help your child take a break in the car with their weighted blanket, over-the-ear headphones, etc. and then return to the party. Put them in a backpack and bring them with you.
- Maybe you're at a house party and can take a familiar small pop up tent that you're able to set up in a guest bedroom away from the noise for a sensory break.

3 WEIGHTED ITEMS

- A weighted blanket or lap pad during the car ride.
- A weighted vest or backpack during the party.
- Ankle weights hidden under pants / under socks.
- A weighted lap pad during the party when everyone is seated.

4 FIDGETS, HEADPHONES, ETC.

- Give your child a small treasure to hold onto that is comforting and provides calming, proprioceptive input, such as a stress ball or tangle fidget.
- Noise cancelling headphones or ear plugs.
- Bring a baseball hat or sunglasses to help reduce visual overstimulation.
- Use a visual schedule or social story.

5**LEAVE IF NECESSARY**

- Leave before presents / cake if necessary, or take a brain break during these activities, as they are often the most overwhelming.
- Decide on a safe word if possible - for example, "pickles" means it's time to sneak away for a break, or use the ASL sign 'B' for break.

6**FOOD OPTIONS**

- Bring your own snacks / cake that is gluten free, dairy free, soy free, dye free, etc.
- If it's your party, include food options above for kiddos with dietary restrictions.

REMEMBER

Remember that if you have to leave early or if your child is having a hard time, it's OKAY! No one will be mad if you have to jet out early. Have firm boundaries and consistent expectations for your child.

If it's your own child's birthday party, have realistic expectations and know that it probably won't be a pinterest-perfect birthday party and that's OKAY! Birthday parties are really for the adults anyways, so just relax and take a deep breath!