



How to Provide a Bright Holiday for Children with Special Needs

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Children love the holidays. They're excited about the gifts they'll get, and they enjoy seeing family members and friends that they might not otherwise see very often at all. For children with special needs, celebrating the holidays can be harder. They often have limitations that are different than the children around them.

To help make their holidays brighter, *you can be the spark that helps warm their hearts!* Giving your time to these kids will bring a memorable holiday to both of you.

Try these tips to bring more holiday cheer to children with special needs:

- 1. Decide how much time you have to volunteer.** Once you know how much time you're willing to give, for how long, and on what days, you'll be better prepared to offer what you have to companies and organizations that help children who have special needs.
- 2. Determine which charities and businesses you want to volunteer with.** You may want to just go where the greatest need is, but you may also have a special preference for one or more organizations for whatever reason. No matter where you go, *your joy and enthusiasm will be an asset to children who need your love and support over the holidays.*
- 3. Talk to the charities you want to help.** Find out what they really need from you. Most of them need money, but your time and talents will also make a difference. Tell them what you can do and see if they can find ways for you to help. Almost any organization that helps children with special needs will take you.

4. **Pay attention to what the children need.** Once you're working with the children, take time to listen to them and watch them. See what they want and need, instead of just what you want to give them. Toys are great, but they might just want to play a game or have someone who will listen to them. What their special needs are will affect that.
5. **Understand that not all children will take to you.** Some people just like certain people better than others. Don't take it personally if you don't bond with a child you're trying to help. Perhaps there are other children you can help, and someone else will be a better fit for the child you don't connect with. There are always options to help others if you look.
6. **Take time for yourself, too.** Helping children with special needs is a wonderful thing, but you need to take care of yourself so you can continue to help them. Ensure you relax and enjoy your downtime. Don't try to do too much or you may get rundown and feel sluggish. *Stay happy and rested, so you can be more helpful.*

All Children Have A Desire To Be Loved

It's understandable if you find it difficult at times to work with children who have special needs. If you find that you're struggling with your patience, it's time to ***take a little break and get some perspective on your life and theirs.*** That way, you can do more for them.

Keep in mind that the best and most important thing you can give these children is your time and love. They can take great joy from just being able to have someone there. Even if you feel awkward and unsure about how to act, just be yourself. Children can sense when you're sincere, so just give them the love that's in your heart. You'll be glad you did.