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Halloween Tips for the Sensory Sensitive Child

Getting ready to Trick or Treat- Costumes, make-up, basket/bags for candy and treats...it all sounds to be lots of fun, but for the sensory child it is likely a challenge.

You know your child best, so figure out what might cause them the most sensory-stress, so that you can modify accordingly.

Prepare your child in advance, have a conversation in which you mention the fun involved in Halloween. Make a plan together that allows your child to enjoy these festivities, considering your child's sensory issues, their worries, and the nature of this occasion. Allow them to make choices as to costume, makeup and what environment(s) they would most like to participate in. This way, your child will be involved in the plan, he/she will be prepared for the occasion, and he/she will have a plan to follow that will take away some anxiety...

Making a Plan: If planning to go house to house, predetermine the route and the time that you will go treat or tricking, keep it familiar, not too long and close to home. Having your child keep track of time, and warning him/her on the different stages of the plan all along, will help him/her keep it together. Make sure you have a quiet, low-stimulation place at hand where he/she can avoid sensory overload and regroup, in case he/she needs to.

If planning to attend a party, familiarize the child with the venue (school, house, etc.). Prepare them for the noise and excitement levels of other people they may encounter. Discuss one or two strategies they might use if they feel overwhelmed e.g. ask for help; seek out a quiet space or room, or step outside with an adult.

Dressing-Up: It is a good idea to make your child's costumes with their own clothes, clothes that he/she is already comfortable with and will not irritate them because of its texture,

smell, or couture. Be creative and have fun diving in his closet, you will be surprised how amazing a costume can emerge from there...

The Face: Make up can sometimes be irritating or uncomfortable to your child, so if you will apply make-up, make sure you try it in advance to make sure he/she will be Okay with it. your child's vision, impairing not only their vision but possibly their balance and movement, which can be dangerous.

Add wigs, hats, scarves, and other elements as much as your child will be comfortable with, when in doubt, try it in advance.... Hair paint may be a more comfortable option for some.

Back to your plan, Keep daily routines as much as possible, including bed-time. You know how changing significantly your child's routine can cause distress.

Staying Calm: Teaching your child to read his body for alarms or signs of distress, as well as active and passive methods of keeping and regaining control to avoid meltdowns are always important:

Activities that deliver strong sensory input to the muscles and joints are always calming and organizing and should be used before going out trick or treating and when you return.

These activities include:

- Jumping, running, dancing or biking around safely. ...
- Sucking jello through a straw, chewing on ice, or brushing teeth and gums for oral-motor input.
- Pushing, carrying, lifting, and pulling heavy loads, is also helpful.
- Having your child tensing and releasing their muscles and taking deep breaths.

A number of programs on the market, can aid you in preparing your child for a number of challenging situations that can be brought on by this and other holidays. These include:

- Sensory Stories® can be used to teach the child the expected behaviors and coping strategies for the environment in which the child will be participating.
- [Sleep'n Sync](#) offers a variety of programs that may also be of help in keeping your child calm and in relieving the stress of the holiday.
- Sensory Diets help keep the child in the calm alert state needed to be flexible and calm. For more information go to [Autism Interventions](#), page 109.

Keep in mind that Halloween can be used as the right challenge-occasion to talk about fears and how to manage them, if you so wish to do. Even if you don't celebrate it, you can use some other dress-up festivities to have your child overcome fears-one step at a time- on new sensations, get the experience and be confident that he can do it.

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[*Autism Interventions, Exploring the Spectrum of Autism, 2nd Edition*](#)

[*Is It Sensory or Is It Behavior, Intervention Strategies*](#)

