



Fall Activity Tips: Halloween

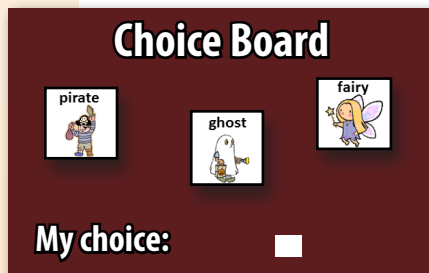
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While Halloween may offer many exciting opportunities for children overall, social interactions, unusual or even scary outfits, and the sharing of treats may present some stressful or challenging situations to individuals with an autism spectrum disorder or related developmental disabilities. Below are some tips that may help avoid anxiety and help the individual enjoy this festive event.

1. Prepare in Advance and Practice:

- ✘ If the child is going to wear a costume, select it in advance based on his or her preferences. Use a Choice Board with 3-5 types of preferred costumes that you may potentially buy or make and let the individual make a decision.
- ✘ If the child has some trouble with



being unusually dressed, practice wearing it prior to Halloween.

- ✘ Create a social narrative to explain what will happen during the evening (see the back) as a way to help prepare the individual.
- ✘ Rehearse activities that may be difficult for the individual, like knocking on the door or ringing the bell, saying "Trick or treat," "Thank you," and answering questions about his/her costume by role-playing.



- ✘ Create a visual schedule for the order of events (i.e., go to 5 houses, grandma and grandpa's house, aunt's house, all done).

2. On the Day of the Event:

Sensory input around Halloween might be intense: children and adults wearing costumes, flickering lights, scary objects in the street, loud noises and so on. Be aware of your child's sensory needs and plan proactively. It is important that the evening ends on a positive note so allow breaks, if needed, or trick-or-treat for a shorter period of time if that will allow a successful ending.

3. Educate Others:

Some adults and/or children might not be familiar with characteristics of autism spectrum disorders. Educating them about the disorders before or during the event, might help them appreciate and understand your child more.

This Individual Has Autism

If you have seen unusual behavior, it may be because this individual has Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Important information about ASD:

- it is a group of neurological disorders that affect 1 in 50 people
- there is no known cure, only effective ways to treat the core challenges

Individuals with ASD have difficulties knowing how to:

- act in social settings
- communicate simple needs
- cope with sensations in their environment

This individual must be taught many things that most people learn naturally. We are helping this individual learn by teaching appropriate ways to interact with people and the environment. Please help us by being respectful of this individual's special needs in processing and learning about the world.



The HANDS (Helping Answer Needs by Developing Specialists) in Autism® Interdisciplinary Training & Resource Center is located within the Department of Psychiatry at the Indiana University School of Medicine. Support for the foundational development of the HANDS in Autism® Center has been provided through a combination of federal and state funding as well as private philanthropies. To learn more, please contact Naomi Swiezy, Ph.D. HSPP, Director, at nswiezy@iupui.edu or find us at www.HANDSinAutism.org.



Learn more about visual support templates at www.HANDSinAutism.org/tools.html

Sample Halloween Social Narrative

Halloween is Fun!



On Halloween, many kids and adults wear costumes and go trick or treating. This is fun!



This year, I will be a _____. It is fun to be a _____ and look different sometimes!



My costume may look scary or funny, but it is OK!



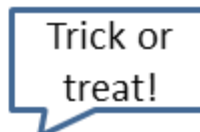
My friends will wear scary costumes too, but I will try not to be afraid. Their costumes are just pretend!



When I go trick-or-treating with my family, I stay with them all the time.



We will walk to the door and ring the bell or knock. When the door is opened, I will try to say "Trick or Treat!"



When people give me candy, I will say "Thank you!" and put candy in my bucket.



People may ask me "Who is this?" And I will say that I am _____



Then, my family and I can go to the next house.



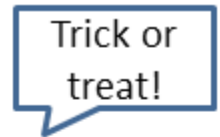
When we get home, I can eat some candy!



When I get home I will let mom or dad check my candy.
They will let me know when it is OK to eat it.



Kids may stop by my house and say "Trick or Treat!"



I can give them some candy! It is fun to share candy and it will
make other kids happy!



Halloween is Fun!