

Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog

Editor's Note: Content presented in the Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog is for awareness and informational purposes only, and it is not meant to be a diagnostic tool.

The holiday season can increase the level of anxiety in all of us. Anxiety is a normal reaction to uncertainty about what is going to happen next, whether that is in the next few minutes, days, or months. For children with epilepsy anxiety is quite common.

Anxiety for a person with epilepsy can be quite significant. Anxiety is that awful “on-edge” feeling and nervousness that can make social situations, especially during the holidays, miserable. When you feel overwhelmed or cannot manage a situation, your body’s response kicks in. The “fight or flight” response gets you ready to run, and that creates stress. The goal is to get the person with epilepsy shed their feeling of being anxious and nervous and get them back to their happy self.

While you may not be able to eliminate all anxiety that your child with epilepsy may experience this holiday season, let’s look at what we need to be thinking about during the holidays to lower your child’s anxiety so that everybody can enjoy the holidays. It is important to be proactive and preventative now and identify the many different situations during the holiday than can raise the level of anxiety for a child with epilepsy.

Listed below are sources of anxiety during the holidays that we need to begin thinking about how to deal with. Let’s begin thinking about the gatherings that take place during the holidays and what causes the anxiety level of children with epilepsy increase:

- Greeting/hugging relatives and friends
- Hanging out with the other kids
- Wearing dressy clothes
- Having nothing to do and feeling anxious
- Dealing with noise and crowds
- Meeting new people and making conversation with them

Another source of increased anxiety for children with epilepsy is holiday meals. They will have to sit by strangers. The food served may not be to their liking. Other anxiety inducing activities include having to sit at the table for a long time and then there is the expectation of having to participate in conversations at the table. While it should be a pleasant experience, holiday meals are anything but enjoyable for child with anxiety.

How can we help our children proactively manage their anxiety? The following activity is one that I have found extremely valuable in managing anxiety.

First, create a three-column chart. Then provide a label for each column. Finally, fill in answers to fit the column heading.

EXAMPLE

Challenges that increase my anxiety	What usually happens when my anxiety increases	What can I do instead
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greeting/hugging relatives and friends • Hanging out with the other kids • Wearing dressy clothes • Having nothing to do and feeling anxious • Dealing with noise and crowds • Meeting new people and making conversation with them 	•	•

It is all about helping your child with epilepsy have a decreased level of anxiety so that they can enjoy the holiday season. Take the initiative and identify sources of your child’s increased anxiety, find out what usually happens when their anxiety increases, and finally, identify what your child will do to mediate or reduce their anxiety. As you have figured out by now, this is a strategy than can be used throughout the year and not just during the holiday season.

From all of us at Epilepsy Alliance Ohio, have a great holiday season!



Editor’s Note: The Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog will be distributed and posted weekly. Always remember – CARPE DIEM – SEIZE THE DAY!

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