15 Tips for Surviving -- and Enjoying -- the Holidays with TBI

BrainLine – www.brainline.org

Flashing lights. Crowded stores. Loud family gatherings. The holiday season should be joyful, but it can often be overwhelming to someone who is living with traumatic brain injury.

If you are living with TBI, share these tips with your friends and family. If someone you love is living with TBI, the tips below can help you plan in advance to make the holiday season happier and more relaxed for all of your friends and family.

These great ideas came from members of BrainLine's wonderful online community.

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1. Identify — in advance, if possible — a quiet place to go at gatherings if you are feeling overwhelmed. This gives you a chance to take a break, and lets your loved ones stay involved in the festivities.
2. Avoid crowded stores and order gifts online instead.
3. If you are shopping in stores, remember to make a list in advance and plan your trips on week days — either early in the morning or late at night when there are fewer crowds.
4. Wear a cap with a brim or lightly tinted sunglasses to minimize the glare of bright lights in stores or flashing lights on a tree.
5. Wear noise-reducing headphones or ear buds. These are also great gift ideas for loved ones with TBI if they don't already have them.
6. Ask a friend to go with you to stores or holiday parties. They can help you navigate crowds and anxiety-producing situations.
7. Plan in advance as much as possible. And ask your hosts what their plans are so you aren't surprised by anything.
8. Volunteer to help with the holiday activities that you enjoy the most and are least stressful for you.
9. Remember to ask for help and accept help if it is offered to you.
10. Ask someone you trust to help you with a budget to avoid overspending on gifts.
11. Take a nap if you need a break.
12. Remember that it's okay to skip the big parties and plan to celebrate in a way that makes you comfortable and happy.
13. Check in advance to see if fireworks are part of outdoor celebrations — and skip them if they make you uncomfortable.
14. If flashing lights bother you, ask your friends and family to turn off the flashing feature on Christmas tree lights or other decorations when you visit their homes.
15. You can let your host know in advance that you may need to leave early. It will help you feel comfortable if you need to get home or to a quiet place and it can also help avoid any hurt feelings.