

*Now, I know I tell you all year long don't talk to strangers and be careful not to take candy from people you don't know, but this is Santa Clause. He is a big man that watches you all year long, breaks into your house at night while you sleep, eats your food and drinks your milk. We need to be very nice to this man and we need to go talk to him. Now, go up there without Mommy and Daddy and sit on his lap. Tell him what you want him to bring for you this year. If you are good for this man, you have never met, he will give you candy and tell you that he will be watching you to see if you are good, so he can break into your house in a few weeks!*

Now really how do we , as parents, explain this strange ritual to "neural typical" kids and have it make sense let alone to my two autistic sons that don't even understand? They don't understand what presents are. They don't understand compassion, how can we expect them to understand the nature of giving to those we love. These kids don't like candy, are scared of crowds, noise, different textures, and can't comprehend how to say hello to his own grandparents, or even what wanting something is! (This isn't even getting into the complexities of religion, which I will not be doing for quite a few years!!!)

My son looked at me like I was insane having a tree in our house and when I asked him what he wanted for Christmas he said, "apples". Now for anyone else this is strange, but the fact is, I was so excited at this because he actually answered my question!!!

When the grandparents ask, "what do the kids want for Christmas?" All I ever have to answer them with is therapy equipment and iTunes gift cards for their learning apps! When this is my answer they always seem upset, "Christmas is for toys and fun, not for therapy equipment for them to work with!" It is hard on me and my boys when no one seems to understand. That the therapy equipment is so much more important to them becoming more aware of themselves, so they can have fun and enjoy life, more than any toy could ever do!

When people ask me what I want for Christmas, all I ever answer is "gas cards, so I can get my boys to their appointments, or maybe an iTunes card for the boys, maybe if I really want to get exciting get me a gift card to Wendy's because that is the only chicken nugget that my son will eat right now!" I don't even think about me anymore it is always about what more can I do for my boys.

I have tried taking them out to watch the Christmas lights and it always turns into a meltdown because the iPad loses its charge or that the twinkle lights and music are too bright and loud. Also, on the occasion I picked the wrong day to go and it is busy, and we end up over in the corner somewhere just trying to stay out of everyone else's way so we don't wreck their good time. Taking the kids out to play in the snow is so off limits because layering their clothes to stay warm irritates them and the cold makes them mad. Not to mention the flight factor. I have NEVER seen a fence around a sledding hill! I have two kids, I can't while sledding or making a snowman or snow angel explain to both of them what is going on, why we are doing it, and keeping a hand on both of them at the same time!

I love Christmas and still trying to make it a time that my kids will eventually understand and hopefully love. However, the amazing challenges that presents are so overwhelming for us as parents and for the kids to understand as well, and sometime I wonder how any of us survive it!!!

I wish everyone an amazing holiday season and hope that we can all stay strong together, for our kids!

Happy Holidays!!!