NEXT FOR AUTISM

CHECKLISTS & PLANNING PAGES

THANKSGIVING
HOSTING PLANNER

Use these pages to move your plan out of your head and onto paper. Check items off, fill in the blanks, and save it for next year.

Need ideas or scripts? See the companion Thanksgiving Hosting Guide for how-to tips.

1 START HERE: MY GATHERING AT A GLANCE

Answer these first. They'll guide every other step.

Date: _____

Start and end time: _____

Format (dinner, potluck, dessert...)**:** _____

Number of guests: _____

My co-host or helper: _____

My recharge spot: _____

QUESTIONS TO HELP ME DECIDE

How many people do I feel comfortable having in my space at once?

How long can I socialize before I need a break?

Which part do I enjoy most: cooking, decorating, or the people?

What's one tradition I want to keep, and one I can let go?

2 MY 4-WEEK TIMELINE

Spreading tasks out keeps any single day from feeling too big. Check items off as you go.

4 WEEKS BEFORE

- [ ] Pick your format, date, start and end time
- [ ] Make your guest list
- [ ] Send invites
- [ ] Ask about food needs and what guests can bring

2 WEEKS BEFORE

- [ ] Choose your menu
- [ ] Make a shopping list sorted by store section
- [ ] Order groceries for pickup or delivery if stores feel draining
- [ ] Pick your recharge spot

1 WEEK BEFORE

- [ ] Buy non-perishables and supplies
- [ ] Confirm the guest count
- [ ] Fill in your day-of run sheet
- [ ] Decide who helps with what, and tell them

2–3 DAYS BEFORE

- [ ] Buy fresh food
- [ ] Clean only the rooms guests will use
- [ ] Set the table and your recharge spot
- [ ] Make any dishes that can be prepped ahead

DAY BEFORE

- [ ] Lay out serving dishes with a sticky note naming each food
- [ ] Pick your outfit (comfort first)
- [ ] Plan a calm activity for the evening

DAY OF

- [ ] Follow your run sheet
- [ ] Eat a snack and drink water before guests arrive

TIP Save your lists after the holiday. **Next year you'll already have a plan that works for you.**

3 MY SPACE CHECKLIST

A SENSORY SETUP

- [ ] Lamps or soft lights instead of overhead lights
- [ ] Music low or off; TV off in the main room
- [ ] No scented candles or air fresheners
- [ ] Window or stove fan ready for cooking smells
- [ ] Comfortable outfit and a fidget ready
- [ ] Seating spread out; a second room for small groups

B RECHARGE SPOT

- [ ] A soft blanket
- [ ] Water and a snack
- [ ] Headphones or earplugs
- [ ] A phone charger
- [ ] A fidget or comfort item
- [ ] Dim or soft lighting

4 GUEST & FOOD PLANNER

Track who's coming, what they're bringing, and any food needs in one place.

GUEST	BRINGING	FOOD NEEDS OR ALLERGIES

5 MY MENU

DISH	MAKE, BUY, OR GUEST?	PREP NOTES AND TIMER
	MAKE · BUY · GUEST	
	MAKE · BUY · GUEST	
	MAKE · BUY · GUEST	
	MAKE · BUY · GUEST	
	MAKE · BUY · GUEST	
	MAKE · BUY · GUEST	
	MAKE · BUY · GUEST	

TIP Include at least one food you know you'll want to eat. **Your safe foods belong at your party too.**

6 MY DAY-OF RUN SHEET

Write your times and tasks below. **Plan at least one quiet break before guests arrive and one during the event.** The first three rows (in gray) are examples for a 3 pm meal.

TIME	TASK	WHO
10:00 am	*Turkey in the oven; set a timer*	*Me*
1:30 pm	*Quiet break (20 min)*	*Me*
2:45 pm	*Reheat sides; carve turkey*	*Helper*

7 MY RESET PLAN

Fill this in ahead of time so you don't have to decide in the moment.

What I will say when I need a break:

_____

_____

Early signs I need a break:

_____

_____

One thing that helps me reset:

_____

Person who can take over:

_____

Our code word:

_____

What I can say if I need an early wrap-up:

_____

_____

8 HOUSE NOTES FOR GUESTS

Post this by the door or send it in a group text. It answers questions before they come up.

HOUSE NOTES

Coats and shoes go: _____

Food is served at: _____

Rooms that are open: _____

Quiet room anyone can use: _____

Event ends at: _____

Wi-Fi or other notes: _____

9 AFTER: REST AND REFLECT

Recovery time is part of hosting. Plan for it the same way you planned the meal.

- ☐ Leave the dishes until tomorrow if you need to
- ☐ Block off quiet time the next day with nothing scheduled
- ☐ Do a favorite low-energy activity: a show, a bath, or a special interest
- ☐ Eat easy leftovers

THREE QUESTIONS FOR NEXT YEAR

1 What went well that I want to keep?

2 What drained me that I can change or skip?

3 What support would make it easier?