



Trevor's Best of Help Tips for a Happy and Safe Kooky Spooky Halloween

Halloween is a fun and exciting holiday; however, it can be an overwhelming experience for many children. The scary costumes, frightening decorations, and loud strange noises can make it especially challenging for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Preparation and planning can help you and your special child stay stress-free during the Halloween festivities. Below are Trevor's "Best of Help" tips to help you and your little-one have a Happy and Safe Kooky Spooky Halloween experience.

Story Time: Create a visual social story to help your child prepare for what a night of Halloween would be like. If possible, write the story together making him/her the "star" of the show. Describe and demonstrate the activities he/she will be participating in and how much fun they will be having. Tailor the story to your child's abilities and attention span. Read the story together many times before the frightful night.

Reality Works: It is always best to use real-life pictures in your visual story. Pictures should include your child, family, and friends participating in the event and homes you'll be visiting on your trick-or-treating route. Also, snap some pictures of everyone in-and-out of costume as well as any Halloween decorations. If your child loves to draw, leave space on the page for that to be included. Make the story as realistic as possible; but most importantly make it FUN!

Dressing-Up: Have your child try-on his/her costume in advance. Consider costumes that fit over your child's clothes such as capes, butterfly wings, tails, etc... Have your child wear their costume for short periods of time at first, and increase the duration of time as you get closer to the event. Dressing-up in costume beforehand will help reduce the chances of any unnecessary distress.

Lines Please: Scripting is a great way to provide your child with the appropriate language and behavior that supports a specific situation. Use index cards to write-out what he/she would say and do on Halloween night. Be sure to number the cards in sequential order.

Role Play: Now it's time to rehearse. It's a fun way to boost your child's confidence and reduce potential anxiety. Get dressed-up, grab those index cards and act out the roles of the trick-or-treater and the door-greeter.

Practice makes Perfect: Practice going to a neighbor's door, ringing the bell and receiving candy. Also, practice greeting people and handing out candy. Visit family, friends or neighbors willing to practice with you in advance. Remember, practice makes perfect, so do it as many times as possible.

Stay on Track: Select your trick-or-treating route and prepare a schedule of events. No one knows your child better than you, so limit distance and time to what they can handle comfortably. Reviewing this in advance will let your child know what to expect and when to expect it. Bring a watch and stay on track to avoid unnecessary anxiety.

Lasting Memories: After the event, go back and re-read your Halloween social story with your child. However, this time as you read, relate scenes in the story back to your actual experience. Talk about how much fun you had together and be sure to give your child super positive praise throughout the review. Recalling the experience while reading the story will help your child remember the event, retain new language, and reinforce appropriate social behaviors. In addition, it will serve to build confidence and competence for next Halloween and reduce anxiety for similar events. Moreover, you'll create wonderful lasting memories together.

Safety First: Walk on sidewalks or planned routes; Look both ways before crossing streets; Do NOT crisscross back and forth across streets; Travel in groups; Dress for the weather; Wear reflective clothing, costumes, bracelets, or make-up; Do NOT visit homes that are NOT well lit; Put your child's name, address and phone number on his/her costume; and Do NOT eat any of your treats before you get home.