

# HOPE!

## **MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM MY FAMILY TO YOURS!**

It is 12 o'clock at night. I awaken to the sounds of music. Someone is strumming a cuatro. The scent of roasting ham lights my spirit afire and realization dawns...it's Christmas. As my uncle parang's group fills up the house with love, a warm, safe feeling encircles me and I am happy. I see my mother's smiles; and my brother and I know we can get away with opening the presents now...

This is the legacy that I have been handed and now that I know my son is autistic, it is still the same, with some modifications. I want him to experience the things I experienced when I was a girl. Perhaps I cannot control this but I can expose him to the same things. So, I'll start with the tree and work up to offering him ham. No strings attached. What he like he likes and what he dislikes, he dislikes.

And these rituals are not the only things I want him and my other child to experience. I want them to inherit the values associated with Christmas because in a weird way these are some of the key principles by which I live my life. I want them to see that the giving of gifts to someone you love symbolizes the ability to open up yourself and give love to that person. The family get-to-gether on Christmas day and New Year's Day symbolizes the importance of family. Family stick together through the good times and the bad. And most importantly the birth of Christ symbolizes that God is in control of our lives and has a purpose for every living thing on earth.

So on Christmas day I hope you will make a toast with my family and I; a toast to love, the love that God has for us, and the love that we have for each other.



# KEEP ME CALM FOR CHRISTMAS

By Aliya Drakes, Occupational Therapist

Here are 5 tips for keeping your individual with autism calm and happy during the celebrations.

1. Use social stories to prepare them. Make sure to include the process of the event: leaving home, what he/she will be doing, who will be there, what will be seen, heard etc.
2. If going to stores or malls try to go when it is less populated eg. At opening time. For get togethers pick ones with fewer people or more familiar people. Explain to your host/hostess what he/she may like and possible triggers, so that the necessary preparations can be made.
3. Have calming objects while on outings. Eg. CD player with calming music, fidget toys, water to sip.
4. Be prepared to leave the store or gathering if the individual's behaviour escalates or if it is difficult for him/her to remain calm.
5. Try to limit the time spent out to what you think he/she can tolerate. Every individual is different. Some kids may be able to stay out a couple of hours but others may need to stay away entirely.

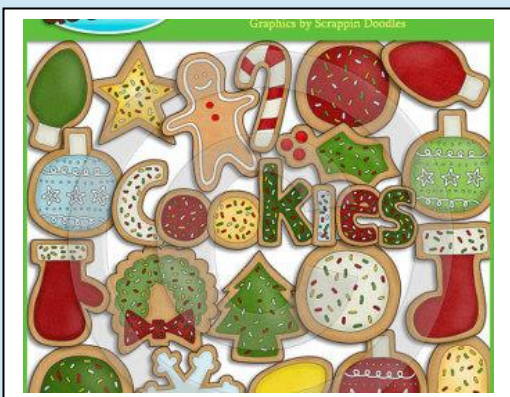


## Christmas Cookies

250 grams/2 ¼ sticks soft butter  
¾ cup sugar  
1/3 cup cocoa powder  
2 cups flour  
½ tsp bicarbonate of soda  
1 tsp baking powder

### Method:

Put the oven to preheat at 325 F and line a tray with parchment paper. Put all the ingredients in your mixer or food processor and mix. Roll out the dough into balls the size of a hazelnut and press flat on the tray. Bake each batch for 15 minutes and cool on the tray for another 15 minutes before removing. Then kick back and eat!



## SITTING DOWN WITH NICHOL

(Nichol Alves is the General Manager of ASTT.)

1. What is your favourite Christmas food?

I absolutely enjoy PASTELLES. It is tradition for me to help both my mother and grandmother make several of them to last throughout the season. I enjoy eating them, but making them is hard work!

2. What is the name of the last good movie or series you watched?

I binged watched 2 seasons of Orphan Black in a weekend.

3. What is your best family ritual for the season?

Apart from Pastelle making, every year for Christmas, I wake up to breakfast with my mother, father, brothers and sister-in-law. This year I look forward to spending my niece's first Christmas with her. We all open our gifts together around the Christmas tree. I also go to lunch at my paternal grandmother's house and see all my father's family; then have dinner with my mother's side of the family.

4. What is your favourite activity for relaxing?

I enjoy meditation, however horseback riding is my passion and I do feel very relaxed, when I do get around to doing it...  
I love being around horses,  
I feel a deep connection.

5. What is the thing you like most about yourself?

I am aware of the laws of attraction and manifesting good things in my life. In order to do this,  
I am a positive thinker  
and a dreamer!



## OPEN DAY AT BRAZIL SECONDARY SCHOOL

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April, ASTT was invited to attend an open day at Brazil Secondary School. This was part of the Royal Bank of Canada's Young Leaders Project on Diversity. While many other schools focussed on racism, Brazil High decided to choose the theme: "the ability in the disability." The reason lies in the fact that there is a high level of bullying of students with disabilities.

As part of the project, the school was preparing to launch the first issue of their magazine, "Brazilian Gems". Kendell Boodoo, a young man with Autism and his mother, Mrs. Amoy Boodoo were both interviewed for the magazine's feature article.

ASTT operated a booth on the day. Mrs. Sue Cornelius, a volunteer at Autism Place, assisted at the booth.



**“the  
ability in  
the  
disability”**





# OUR YEAR IN PICTURES!



Children playing at the sensory table! Family Day, 6 April 2014



Above, Front row Centre: Participants from the Introductory Course pose with Mrs. Kari Dunn Buron (facilitator) and ASTT's President, Mrs. Teresina Sieunarine.



World Autism Day Celebrations, Autism Place, 2 April 2014



Parents at Sara Stephen's OT Workshop, 27 September 2014



Artwork by Glendon Crepin



ASTT Executive meets the District Governor, Rotary Club At Arthur Lok Jack, UWI



# Calendar of Events

- November 28<sup>th</sup>      6.00pm      Movie Night, Autism Place
- December 6<sup>th</sup>                      ASTT Centre Closes**
- December 7<sup>th</sup>      2.00pm      Christmas Party
- December 10<sup>th</sup>      11.00am      Therapeutic & Life Skills Center  
Christmas Party
- January 5<sup>th</sup>                      Autism Place reopens**

## Early Warning Signs of Autism



*The most obvious signs of autism and symptoms of autism tend to emerge between 2 and 3 years of age.*

- 6 months:**              No big smiles or other warm, joyful expressions.  
Rarely makes eye contact when interacting with others.  
May not show curiosity about things around them.  
May not respond to others emotions.
- 9 months:**              No back-and-forth sharing of sounds, smiles, or other  
facial expressions.
- 12 months:**              Lack of response to name.  
No babbling or "baby talk".  
No back-and-forth gestures, such as pointing, showing,  
reaching, or waving.  
Repetitive body motions, e.g. rocking, hand flapping.  
Lacking pretend play eg 'peek a boo'.

### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_

Basic \$20.00                      Financial \$100.00                      Lifetime \$500.00



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