

CELEBRATING THE HOLIDAYS WITH FOOD ALLERGIES

It's the holiday season, which means lots of desserts, homemade treats, casseroles and dips will be laid out for public consumption. This presents a challenge for those with allergies—especially when most treats are unlabeled. Food allergic individuals can feel left out of festivities; however, there are ways to reduce anxiety through the holidays while staying happy, healthy, and allergy free. Here are some holiday gathering tips for both hosts and guests:

Hang on to labels. Keep food labels for everything used to prepare a festive homemade holiday meal so an allergic guest may double-check the ingredient list.

Avoid cross-contamination. Care with utensils and surfaces when preparing foods is a must. Rinsing a knife that chopped walnuts is insufficient—thoroughly scrub all utensils and surfaces with soap and water and wipe clean.

Use color coding. How about trying color-coded cooking utensils this year? A bright red silicone spatula or a nifty lime green serving spoon is sure to alert food-allergic guests.

Bring a safe dish. If you're food allergic and even if the party you're invited to is not a potluck, offer to bring a safe dish so there's definitely something you can eat. Your host will be thankful not to have to prepare separate food items, and sharing dishes that are allergen-free will delight others.

Review the rules. Go over “the rules” for parties with your kids in the car so that the most important safety rules, such as not eating a food unless he or she has checked with you first, will be fresh in their minds when you arrive.

Check in beforehand. If you are allergic, always let your host or restaurant where you're celebrating know in advance—don't assume they will remember. Be sure to remember to always carry your rescue medication just in case of emergency.

GROWTH MINDSET VS. FIXED MINDSET

A parent asked if there was a way to help her son persevere when things get difficult. First thought was to relate some pertinent information that might be helpful as we encourage and praise our children through challenges toward triumphs.

“People who believe in the power of talent tend not to fulfill their potential because they're so concerned with looking smart and not making mistakes. But people who believe that talent can be developed are the ones who really push, stretch, and confront their own mistakes and learn from them.” This is the belief and teaching of Carol Dweck; a Stanford psychologist and researcher who became interested in why some children faced challenges with a can-do attitude and others would give up. She wrote a book, **Mindset: The New Psychology of success**, and has a wonderful website called mindsetworks.com.

Brain Fact:

The brain is a muscle. The more we use it the stronger it becomes. In fact, taking on challenges (things that are hard for us) *literally* changes the brain. This phenomena is called neuroplasticity; the ability of the brain to change, adapt, and “rewire” itself throughout our entire life. We are never too old to learn something new. So

how do we nurture a growth mindset in our children? Start by helping them shift the way he/she looks at challenges and setbacks.

INSTEAD OF SAYING THAT (fixed mindset)	SAY THIS! (growth mindset)
It's too hard	I'll keep trying
I can't do that	How can I get better at that?
I give up	I will keep working!
I'm afraid I'll make a mistake.	Mistakes are how we learn best.
They're smarter than me.	What can I learn from them?
This is too hard.	This may take some time and effort.
I'm a failure	I can learn from my mistakes.
I don't get it	What am I missing?
I hate to be wrong.	Is this really my best work?
I don't like others to do better than me.	I'm going to figure out what they do and try it!