



EFMP Exceptional Family Member Program

Henderson Hall Marine corps Community Services

December, 2023



UNTRADITIONAL

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Holidays can be tough for military families, often far from extended family/friends and even each other due to deployments, TDY, etc. There can be pressure to make a holiday 'perfect,' but needed tweaks, like a bedtime story over a video call or pizza instead of turkey and fixings, may just become next year's treasured traditions.

This month's newsletter focuses on managing the holiday season with you and your family's well-being in mind. Whether your family includes disabilities, chronic illness, or mental health challenges, try to slow down this holiday season, say 'no' when needed, and model self-advocacy for your own needs.

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HOLIDAYS

with chronic illness



Chronic illness has its own timeline and the busyness of the holiday season, shorter days, and added stressors like travel may send you or your loved one on a one-way ticket to a flare. Taking the time for self-care can lead to more meaningful time with loved ones

Conserve Your Energy:

- Consider beginning prep earlier so you can include as many rest breaks as you need to get the guest room ready or complete other chores
- Try to group tasks by location
- Identify your priorities. Skipping the work holiday party may mean you have the stamina to attend your child's school play
- When possible, take a seat! No one said you need to fold laundry or chop vegetables standing up
- Accept offers of help. Even if someone may not do a task exactly *your* way, it can give you the energy to handle your higher priorities
- Consider online shopping or grocery pickup for gifts and necessities. Commissaries offer free curbside pickup

Set Boundaries: Kindly saying “no” to invitations, trigger foods, alcohol, or requests can be difficult. It may help to speak with a friend or family member about your boundaries before the requests start coming in-They can support you as you state and keep your limits.

Find Support: Consider reaching out to online support groups like the Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall EFMP Sip-N-Share, [MilOneSource free non-medical counselors](#), or Henderson Hall's [Community Counseling Program](#) to help you maintain your best mental health



CELEBRATIONS

And Kids



This time of year routines get thrown out the window. It can be tough for typically-developing children, let alone children with disabilities.

Read on for suggestions to organize the season for maximum enjoyment for all family members.

Preserve Routine: Try to keep meals, bedtimes, and nap schedules as close as possible to normal. If it has to be a different time, due to a new time zone for instance, consider bringing an item or activity that's part of your routine to help ease the transition. This could be a beloved blanket, song, or your child's own dishes.

Talk It Out: Help your child understand what to expect and what is expected of them. This may involve looking at pictures of family members or videos of the event, talking about behavior expectations, or reading a scripted story about the upcoming event. Consider a scripted story about winter break from school. [Free editable story here.](#)

Advocate:

- Consider talking to family ahead of time with ways to interact with your child (i.e., teach them a few signs, send a picture of a communication board, give them a few special interest topics as talking points)
- Set boundaries with family/friends to support your child's sensory needs. Reminders not to pressure your child for hugs or to eat specific treats may be necessary. (Check out "Don't Hug Doug" in our lending library for a good resource for young family)
- Establish a safe place if staying at someone else's home. Many children love a large cardboard box if a separate room or tent isn't available.



DON'T SLEEP ON RESPITE CARE

Eligible families can be reimbursed for up to 20 hours of EFM dependent care per month (level of need 3 and 4). Consider using that time for a personal rest or to engage in errands/activities your EFM may find too stimulating. Contact your family case worker to learn more.

NOISY TOYS

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Not only can loud toys be disruptive, they can actually be dangerous. Permanent hearing loss can result from extended time with toys at unsafe hearing levels. This is compounded by the fact that children often play with toys close to their ears or face. Annually, the Sight and Hearing Association releases a list of the biggest offenders right around the holidays. Some of the toys on the list exceed 85 dB, which is OSHA's limit for mandatory hearing protection.

As new toys come into your home, consider ways to reduce your child's noise exposure by choosing the lower volume setting, covering the speaker with tape, or removing the batteries altogether.

That's a Wrap!

Does a loved one struggle with fine motor skills? Consider wrapping gifts in bags with a few pieces of tissue paper to pull out or check out this YouTube tutorial for ripping wrapping in a snap.



Virginia

01 DEC, 1000: Monthly MetroRail Travel Training with Arc of NOVA

Free. SmarTrip card provided. Individuals with disabilities and a designated adult are invited to practice basic travel skills and gain confidence in using the Metro. [Pre-registration](#) required.

06 DEC, 1300-1345: Chair Yoga

\$15. Occurs weekly on Wednesdays. Gentle, seated yoga class with modifications available. Presented by the Museum of Contemporary Art Arlington.
information@mocaarlington.org

07 DEC, 0800-1300: Autism Resource Clinic

Free. Check-in at 0745. Half-day seminar held at Alexander T. Augusta Military Medical Center on Fort Belvoir on the first Thursday of every month. Local experts and resources will join in-person and virtually to empower parents as they develop a team of support. For more information: Tiffany Brown, MSA (571)-231-3264.

11 DEC, 1600-2000: Special Needs Dining at Out of the Blue Crab and Seafood

Gainesville, VA. On the second Monday of every month, this restaurant issues an invitation to families and individuals with disabilities. To make a reservation/schedule accommodations, contact 571-284-6350

13 DEC, 1630-2000: Sensory-Friendly Holiday Movie

Free. Quantico, VA. Screening of "The Grinch" hosted by Quantico EFMP. Holiday crafts for free, concessions for purchase. [Registration required.](#)

Virtual

10 DEC, 100-1130: Trust Talk Tuesday with ARC of NOVA

Free. Small group discussion on special needs trusts and financial planning. Held every Tuesday. [Registration required.](#)

12 DEC, 1130-1230: Lunch and Learn: Accessing Community Resources and Recreation Inclusion Opportunities*

Free. Virtual or in-person. Pre-register at ombefmo.eventregistration@usmc-mccs.org

13 DEC, 100-1100: Hybrid Sip-N-Share Support Group

Free. Sponsored by Army Community Service. Open to all branches of service. Email Tashawn.n.wilson.civ@army.mil or carol.m.burchfield.ctr@army.mil for the link.

26 DEC, 1130-1230: Lunch and Learn: Introduction to EFMP and Respite Care*

Free. Virtual or in-person. Pre-register at ombefmo.eventregistration@usmc-mccs.org

*Indicates course offered by Henderson Hall EFMP

Maryland

4 DEC, 0900-1100: [A-Z Come Play with Me](#)

Free. 2462 85th Medical Battalion Avenue, Fort Meade, MD. Playgroup for ages 18 months- 4 years including story time and crafts. Call 301-677-4118 to register.

14 DEC, 1300-1400: [EFMP Coffee and Chat](#)

Free. Starbucks Ridgeview Shopping Center. Sponsored by Army Community Services. To register, call [+1\(301\)677-4779](#) or [+1\(301\)677-5590](#)

13 DEC, 1300-1400: [Free Breastfeeding Support Group](#)

Free. 4927 auburn Avenue, #100 Bethesda, MD 20814. [Link](#)

20 DEC, 1730-1830: [EFMP Family Bowling Night](#).

\$2 shoe rental, free game. Fort Meade, MD. Contact 301-677-4779 to register.

Washington D.C.

2 DEC, 1200-1300: [Culture Queen Kids Hour](#)

Free. Storytime and crafts with Grammy-nominated teaching artist Culture Queen. Hosted by the Anacostia Community Museum. [Link](#)

2 DEC, 1100-1300: [Storytime with the Grinch](#)

Free. Hosted by Washington Navy Yard MWR and EFMP at the National Museum of the Navy. Note, if program is full on EventBrite, email paul.h.perry4.civ@us.navy.mil to reserve a spot. [Link](#)

6 DEC, 1100-1200: [Strong Start Community Playgroup](#)

Free. Children 0-12 months. Strong Start DC Early Intervention Program Community Playgroups provides families with information on their child's development. Play groups facilitated by early intervention professionals. RSVP required. Contact Christopher Chapman at (202) 741-0792 or Christopher.Chapman@dc.gov. [Link](#)

15 DEC, 1100-1200: [Strong Start Community Playgroup](#)

Free. Children 12-24 months. Strong Start DC Early Intervention Program Community Playgroups provides families with information on their child's development. Play groups facilitated by early intervention professionals. RSVP required. Contact Christopher Chapman at (202) 741-0792 or Christopher.Chapman@dc.gov. [Link](#)

19 DEC, 1200-1330: [JBAB Starbucks Coffee Connect with Blue Star Families](#)

Free. Join other military-connected families over coffee. Third Tuesday of every month. [Link.](#)

Sensory Friendly Activities across the NCR

Alamo Drafthouse Cinema

Alamo for All program is active in both Northern VA and DC. All shows on Tuesday before 2:00 p.m. are sensory-friendly. Additional shows are available on weekends.

AMC Theatres

Second and fourth Saturdays for family-friendly movies and Wednesday evenings of every month offer sensory-friendly showings

Children's Museum of Virginia

Portsmouth, VA. Reduced number of visitors and adapted programs/exhibits. Note: Second floor currently under construction. Held the second Sunday of every month. [Link.](#)

Chuck E Cheese

Sensory-Sensitive Sundays. Participating locations open two hours early on the first Sunday of the month.

Kennedy Center

Price varies. Lower lighting during entire performance, reduced sounds, and designated quiet area of theater. Guests are welcome to talk and move throughout performances. Website includes scripted stories to talk about an upcoming visit. [Link.](#)

Regal Movies

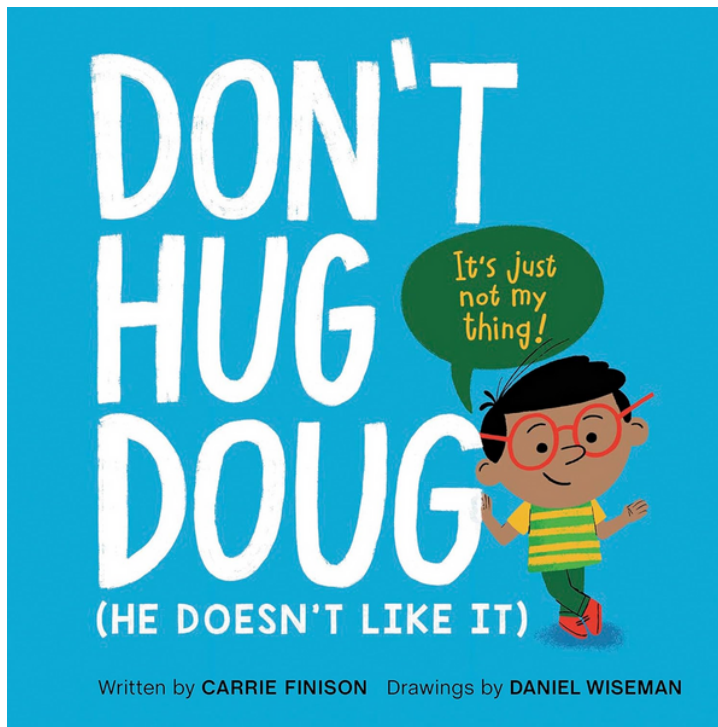
My Way Matinee Program offers sensory-friendly showings as the first show on Saturdays on select Saturdays.

Santa Cares

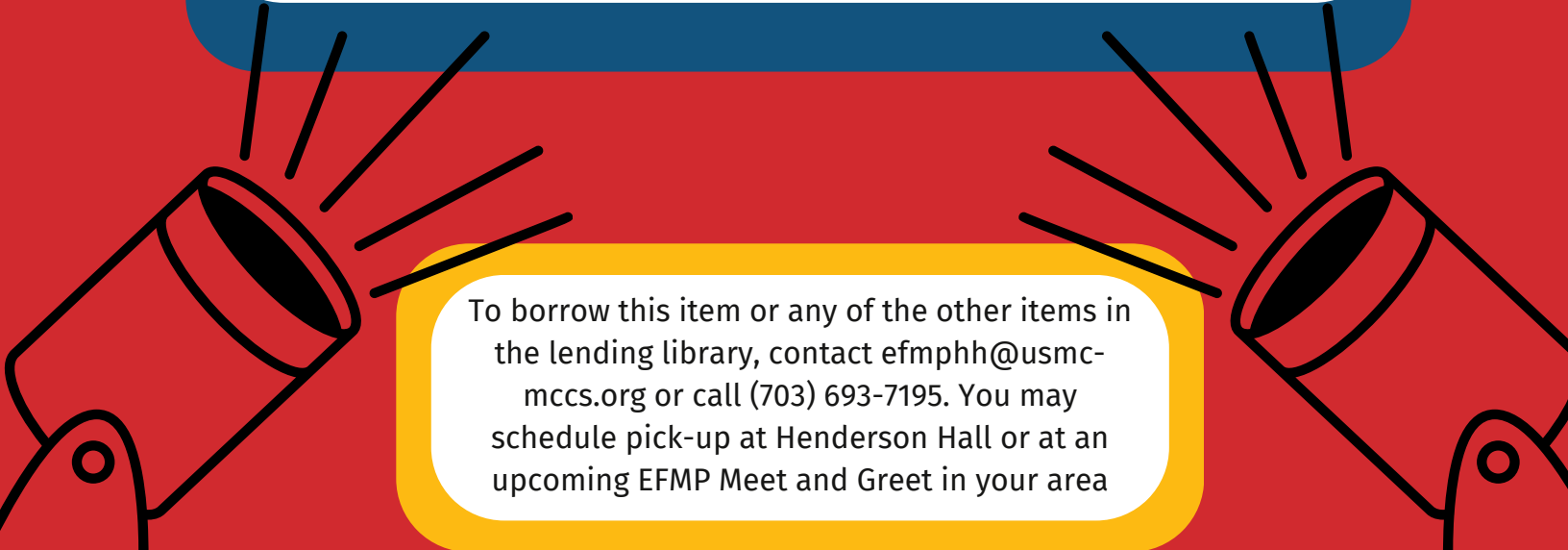
Photos with sensory-friendly Santa at a variety of locations over the next month. [Link](#)

Walmart

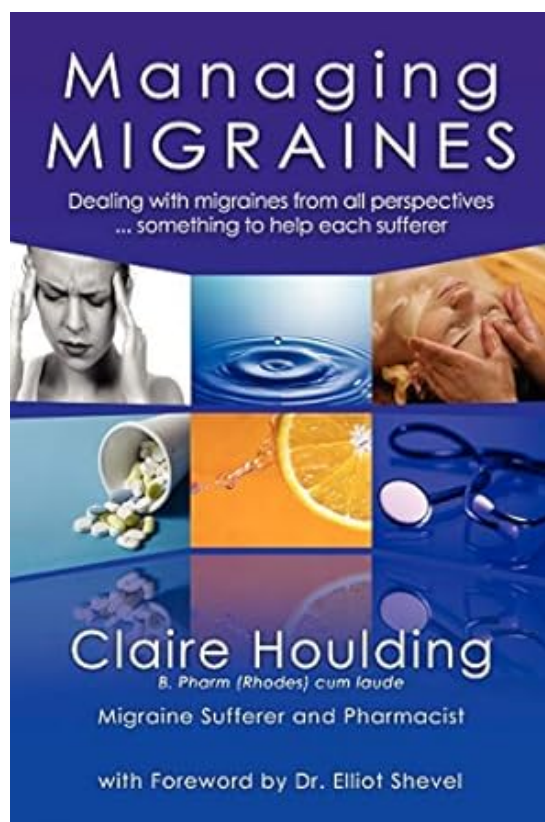
Sensory-friendly shopping hours are being reinstated from 8:00 a.m.-10:00 a.m. at all locations across the U.S.



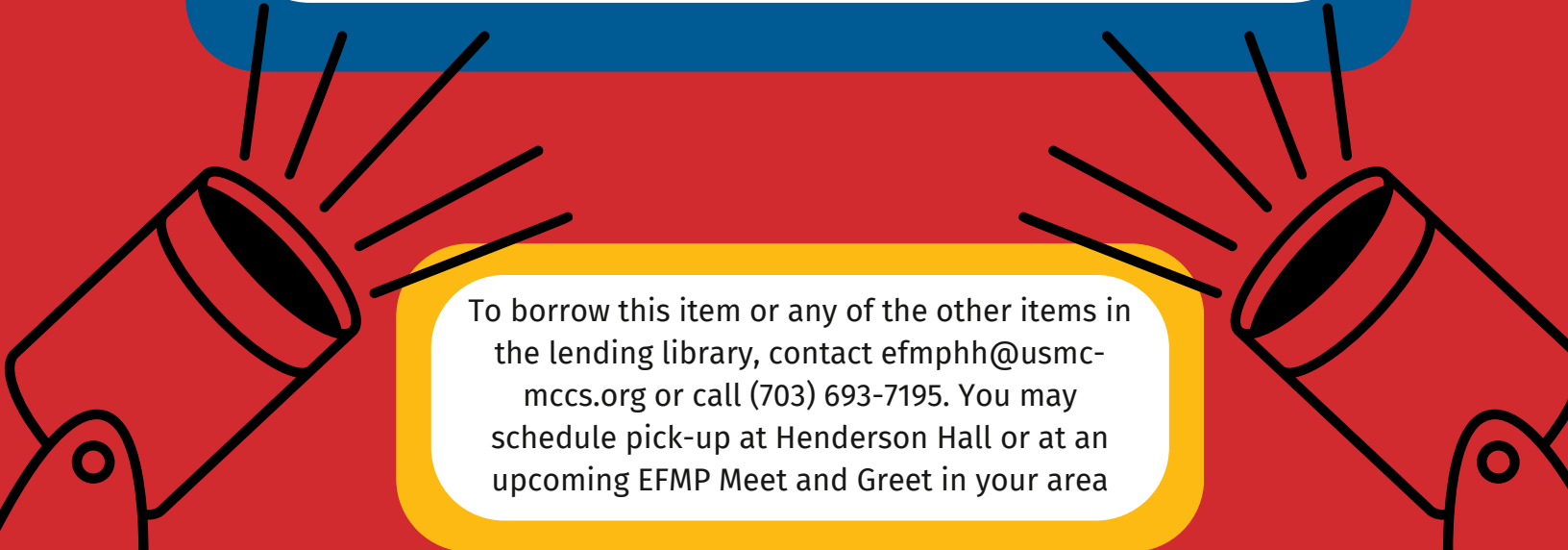
“Don’t Hug Doug (He Doesn’t Like It)” by Carrie Finison is a delightful children’s book about a confident kid who prefers high-fives over hugs. Use this story to talk about bodily autonomy—a perfect conversation for the holiday season. Not only can you teach kids to self-advocate for their needs, but you can practice perspective-taking for kids who may have a harder time reading others’ social cues. The only way to know if someone likes hugs is to ask!



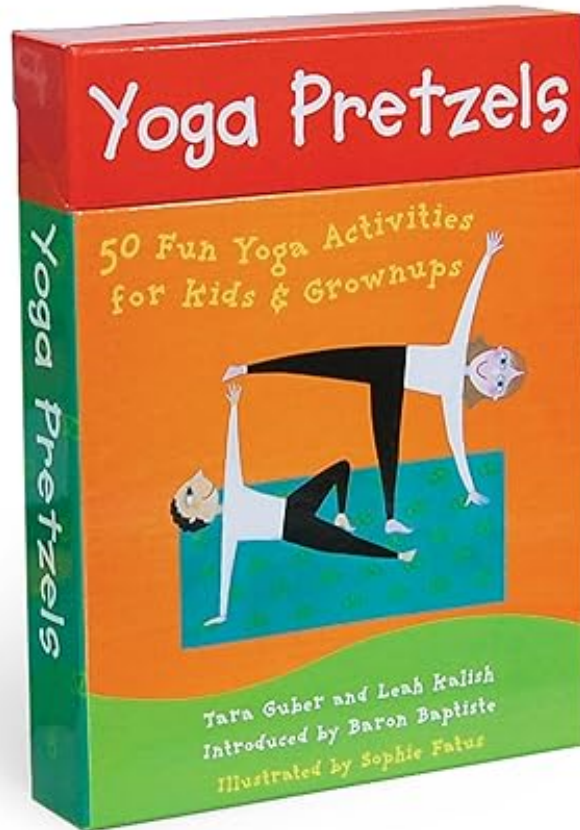
To borrow this item or any of the other items in the lending library, contact efmphh@usmc-mccs.org or call (703) 693-7195. You may schedule pick-up at Henderson Hall or at an upcoming EFMP Meet and Greet in your area



Learn to manage your migraines with an expert-both a medical professional and a fellow migraine sufferer. This book includes a migraine diary to support trigger identification. The author uses family-friendly terms to discuss a variety of treatments, though any treatment (including supplements) should be discussed with your primary care provider.



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Join your little for a movement break or some breathwork to calm during the busy holiday season. 50 activities divided into nine sections (breaths, balance, stand, back bend, partner, games, and time in) could be a great party game at a family gathering or could become part of your weekly bedtime routine.

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Twiddle Pup is designed for individuals with sensory needs, including autism and Alzheimer's disease or other dementias, intended to reduce stress and offer safe sensory stimulation and comfort. Machine washable, Twiddle Pup includes soft fur, a crackle pouch, wooden beads, textured ribbons and a hook and loop pull patch. Ideal for a quiet space or a trip in the car.

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What is a Special
Needs Trust?

An important part of planning for the future!
It lets you save money for a family member
with an intellectual/developmental disability
without affecting their ability to receive
public benefits (i.e., SSI or Medicaid).

For more information, see the [ARC of Northern VA
Beginner's Guide](#)

HH EFMP Services

- Family support/non-clinical case management
- Informal Assignment Screening
- EFMP Attorney Assistance
- Resources and Referrals
- Support at IEP/IFSP meetings
- Respite Care Reimbursement Program
- Eligibility and enrollment for Tricare ECHO
- Transition Assistance (PCS, ETS)
- Workshops and Training
- Lending Library
- Loan Locker
- Family Needs Assessment

Henderson Hall MCCA is committed to providing accessible, inclusive events and services. Please contact us with concerns or suggestions
efmpha@usmc-mcca.org
(703) 693-7195
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Bldg. 12
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