Individuals with autism and sensory integration differences often have difficulty with season changes. Season changes may mean changing clothing, changing routines, changing times, and even changing seasonal allergies.

There are some strategies that you can use to make the transition into a new season more bearable.

**Strategies for Changing Routines & Changing Times**

Changing routines and times during the autumn season affects most people. The clock gets moved back an hour. Ideally, we appreciate being awake during hours filled with light and asleep during the hours that are dark. In reality, circadian rhythm is affected and influenced by light and dark.
This rhythm affects sleep and the ability to self-regulate. Individuals may have difficulty adjusting and winding down in the evening.

**Prepare for the time change.**
For individuals who are aware of the time change, or who tend to stay with the previous season’s schedule regardless of the clock, it may help to read a *social narrative* about the time change and then to slowly and incrementally adjust bedtimes and wake times in 15-20 minute intervals for a week or two before the time change.

**Create a nighttime routine:**
Individuals may need to prepare their bodies for rest by decreasing activity and light in the home as bedtime approaches. This means turning off electronics, putting away activities that energize, and beginning to slow the body and mind down.

**Make a visual routine.** It may help for individuals to use visuals or lists for activities related to getting ready for bed. The routines tied to the bedtime routine will signal that it is time to wind down. These may include preparing for the day ahead, taking a warm bath or shower, reading a book or listening to soft music, and rocking slowly (i.e. in a rocking chair).

Remember to use visual systems as you plan for the day ahead. These systems can take the form of daily bins, hanging systems, lists, a designated spot for the next day’s clothing, or photos of clothing options to make choices. Keep in mind that being prepared means less prep time the next morning, a few more moments of sleep, and less anxiety heading out the door.

Recognize that tired individuals may appear hyperactive and silly and may even get a second-wind after being tired. Poor self-regulation is a typical issue with sensory processing differences. Allow extra time to wind down by priming and preparing and following the routine set. Turn off the television and other electronics prior to starting the process of winding down. Keep in mind that sounds from other rooms in the house can be distracting when trying to sleep. Recognize what activities energize and which calm. For example, it is important to avoid caffeine in the late afternoon, to reduce light as evening approaches, to skip late day naps, to avoid strenuous exercise and energizing movement right before bedtime, to sleep in a dark room, and to set a consistent sleeping and waking schedule. This may mean establishing some consistency between weekday and weekend schedules.

Provide tactile input for calming. Do you remember sleeping with a teddy bear or favorite blanket as a child? That is because touch can have a calming effect. It may help to have a squishy ball, favorite blanket, pillow, or other soft item to provide calming input at bedtime.