

Preparing for the 4th of July

A calm, prepared approach — whatever your family chooses.

Every family navigates the 4th of July differently — and all of those choices are valid. Some will head out with the right preparation; others find the most supportive thing is to stay home and create something calm. **This guide is for both.**

01 IF YOU'RE GOING OUT Preparation Checklist

- Talk through what will happen in simple terms: "Friday night there will be loud bangs around 9pm. We can leave anytime."
- Practice a calming strategy your child knows before the day arrives.
- Scout a quiet retreat space at the location before the event starts.
- Put headphones on before fireworks begin, not after.
- Watch a short fireworks video together so the sounds are familiar, not a shock.
- Pack a sensory kit: headphones, sunglasses, a fidget, a comfort item, a preferred snack.
- Know the start time — leave beforehand if needed, or plan to arrive after.
- Narrate calmly: "That was a big one. You're safe. There will be more."

TIP Prepare a simple exit plan together. Telling your child *"we can leave anytime"* — and meaning it — reduces anticipatory anxiety significantly and gives them a sense of control over the evening.

02 IF YOU'RE STAYING HOME Creating Something Good

- Close windows and draw blackout curtains before dark to cut light and sound.
- Watch a fireworks display on screen with the volume off, paired with music they love.
- Let your child lead the pace. There's no agenda to keep.
- Use white noise, a fan, or preferred music to buffer outdoor sounds.
- Make a special "holiday activity" for the night: a favorite meal, movie, or indoor craft.
- Have a calming plan ready in case neighborhood fireworks start unexpectedly.

TIP Frame staying home as a choice you made *for* them, not a limitation. *"We planned a special night just for us"* lands differently than *"we couldn't go"* and helps the evening feel intentional rather than missed.

03 THE DAY AFTER Resetting

- Expect some dysregulation — even a managed evening is a big sensory event.
- Name what went well, however small.
- Return to routine as quickly as possible on July 5th.
- Note what to do differently next year while it's fresh.