

## In Preparation for Christmas

Please remember that it doesn't matter what everyone else is doing or others' expectations as you know what's best for your family, with the stress triggers around and the calmers necessary at this time of year. We, as the adults, are the stress regulators needed.

Here are some ideas of what might help...

- Scaffold the days with some usual routines to support stability, security and safety as Christmas can be very triggering.
- Be explicit about the fact that it is ok to feel sad, upset or to grieve over Christmas. That whatever feelings they feel during the season can be felt alongside you, as their fellow traveller. Our children can sometimes feel pressure to be all joyful and sparkly. Encourage authenticity.
- It can be tempting to book in lots of special events during the festive season. Less is best so do spread out special events with home family days. Ensure the calendar is easily accessible and ensure everyone knows that plans might change as the adults will keep an eye on stress levels.
- Try and space out seeing different people to allow for downtime too.
- If you have a child who is looked after and there is planned contact over the Christmas period – indirect or direct – do ensure you are part of the decision making. Share what you think your child can manage. Your opinion matters.
- Try and connect with the outdoors at regular intervals – the countryside, the forest or the beach during the festive session. Go for a walk, have a Christmas picnic or play outdoor games.
- Create your own rituals and traditions. It is helpful for our children to have the familiarity of the same day/date each year to increase familiarity.



- If you do feel your children would benefit from a visit from Santa, focus on his safe, kind, generous unconditional positive regard for children and consider together with the children where you would like him to drop off their gifts, leaving a note about this on the front door or making him a special trail to follow: in the shed outside, in the porch, in the living room, in the conservatory... It doesn't have to be the bedroom.
- Make the most of all the possibilities for sensory comfort during the colder weather, for example cosy hot water bottles, throws and oversized hoodies and onesies!
- Optimise connection opportunities over mugs of hot chocolate or other hot drinks.
- Drive about and check out the local light displays around your area. Treat it like a competition. Top prize, second and third etc. Being in the car together sometimes means good connective conversations as no eye contact is required.
- Facilitate collaborative problem solving together as a family – jigsaw puzzles, Jenga towers, Lego construction, technical builds, gaming...
- Due to how sensitive our children are to sugars try to alternate special meals or days with usual diet meals and days too.
- Build in some quiet down time for everyone – colouring, dot to dot, crosswords, word searches, journaling, reading...

**Louise Michelle Bombèr | November 2024**

