

Top five ideas for a happy Christmas:



1. Look at the world of Christmas through your child's eyes.

What aspects of Christmas would they really enjoy? Which aspects of Christmas would overload them and which might be avoided? Incorporate things they might like into their daily routine perhaps a picture saying, 'Christmas activity'. This could be the opening of an Advent calendar, lighting a candle or something that your other children could observe or do alongside them. Perhaps only one area in the house could be the 'Christmas zone' rather than decorations all over the house. This could greatly reduce any sensory overload and anxiety about changes in the house. Put the decorations up with your child so they can see what is happening and help choose where and what to put up. It can be a big shock if they come home from school and find that there are loads of changes in the whole house without understanding why this has happened.

2. Give your child some quiet time/ Christmas free moments during the holiday.

Having lots of visitors coming and going and lots of noise etc can be over whelming. Timetable in some time for your child to just chill out, away from others, i.e. on computer/ reading a book. This allows you to reward them i.e. stay at the table and then you can choose your own activity.

3 Make receiving and giving presents fun and understandable:

Receiving lots and lots of presents all at once can be overwhelming for some children. Pace out the presents over a period of days, perhaps 1 or 2 a day and you could timetable this event into their routine. Practice unwrapping and wrapping presents/ toys so they are familiar with what it means. Practice giving presents to their toys etc. You could practice the emotions of surprise and happiness to show them how to express their feelings when they give and receive presents. See the school information sheet on the website about possible places where you might find sensory toys or unusual items.

4. Preparation is key.

Use the Advent calendar to help count the days until Christmas. This can be effective preparation time and manage constant questioning presents etc. Share pictures of what happens or what happened last Christmas. Explain or make picture books about who is coming to visit and when dinner will be etc. Father Christmas can be scary; who's this bearded stranger in a big red suit laughing? Prepare them with a story or a DVD like Raymond Briggs 'Father Christmas' story.

5. Have fun!

Remember to spend some time with friends and family relaxing, it's your holiday too. Families that relax together and find shared moments of enjoyment cope with any possible future stress and difficulties far better.