

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 any of your other children could observe or do alongside them. Perhaps one area in the house could be a Christmas zone rather than all of the communal areas. This could greatly reduce any sensory overload and anxiety about changes in your house for your child. 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 the whole room is transformed whilst they were out and without understanding why.

2. Give your child some quiet time/ Christmas free moments over the period.

All those people coming and going and the noise etc can be over whelming. Timetable in some time to just chill away from others, i.e. on computer/ reading a book. This allows you to reward them i.e. for staying at the table, by following it with time doing their own thing.

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 that you can timetable into their routine. Practice unwrapping and wrapping presents/ toys up, so they are familiar with what to do. Practice giving presents to their toys etc. You could practice the emotions of surprise and happiness to show how you feel when you give and receive presents. DVDs can help, for instance Teletubbies has a programme involving presents. School has information on different DVDs and sources where you might find sensory toys or unusual items for presents.

4. Preparation is key:

Use the Advent calendar to help count the days until Christmas. This can be good preparation time. 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; a bearded stranger in a big red suit laughing. Prepare them with a story or a DVD like Father Christmas by Raymond Briggs.

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.

(With acknowledgements to NAS fact sheets on Christmas)

