

Navigating Christmas with little ones



Christmas should be the time of year for festive fun, feasts, family and friends and for the most part it is, but all that extra fun, not to mention extra sweets, can soon become overwhelming for little ones.



Here is OPP's guide to navigating the Christmas period with your little cherubs to put you on track for the best Christmas ever!

ROUTINE

Loss of routine can be very unsettling for children and can easily make them feel overwhelmed. Every day can feel different, the house looks different, the food is different and bedtimes can be different. Routines are what help children feel safe in their environment. They like to know what's coming next, which is very reasonable when you think about it. So it's a good idea to talk through what will be happening over the next few days. That way they will feel part of what's happening and may chat about it. Try to keep one or two things the same every day, such as morning or bedtime routines to keep some of the stability.

BEHAVIOUR

More so than at any other time of the year children's behaviour is under the microscope. This can quickly get too much for them. Imagine being told you are being watched and judged constantly and if deemed 'good

enough' you get a reward. That would quickly get too much for anybody. So while the 'Elf on the Shelf' and 'Santa is watching' can seem like harmless fun from an adult's perspective, it feels very real for children. Misbehaving and making mistakes is part of growing up and the way children learn, so try to keep the behaviour talk light and unthreatening. Keep your household traditions fun!

GET THEM INVOLVED

If your children are anything like mine they are like foxes in a hen house when it comes to unwrapping presents! They don't even seem to breathe, blink or take the time to look at each present; it's just on to the next. Again this is quite normal and it's easy to put adult expectations of behaviour on ones so little. The adrenaline can just get too much and they may also look sad or appear ungrateful once the opening of presents is over.

You can help children understand the meaning of presents and the joy of giving by getting them to help you shop and choose presents for people close to them.

FEELINGS NOT THINGS

Try to focus on the general feeling your children will have when thinking back to their childhood Christmas times. Were they filled with family traditions, nice food, time spent well together? That should be the goal. I'm sure we can all remember those special presents but overall for me the feeling of my childhood Christmas times is one of family, excitement and joy.

GET OUTSIDE

Overstimulation can easily happen over the festive period. So if things start to get a bit much in the house with the noise, lights and chaos, drop everything and get outside. A lungful of fresh air and a run around can do wonders for a reset for both you and little ones.

And finally...

We would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from us here at OPP and thank you for all of your support over the last year.

Emma Booth



