

SUPPORTING CHILDREN THROUGH THE CHRISTMAS STORM

Based on ideas from Dan Hughes and Beacon House

Christmas is coming and we each bring our own sledge load of past experiences, expectations, internal and external pressures. Here are some top tips for how to survive and thrive in the Christmas Storm:



Christmas wisdom for the adults

It is OK to prioritise your own regulation. If you feel broken, rage, or despair, your child will feel it too. The first Christmas job is to regulate yourself.

By acknowledging your own feelings towards Christmas, you can start to see how they might impact your empathy and connection with others.



Christmas brings huge changes in routine and expectation. It is OK to avoid or adapt certain Christmassy rituals to suit your child/family. By doing this you will support your child to not have the experience of “failing at Christmas.”



Excitement can often feel the same as stress for children. It's OK to keep things low key. By reducing excitement you are reducing stress. Making the Christmas schedule explicit and predictable lowers the stress for all.



Do more of what works, rather than less. Children need more of your presence, supervision and support than usual. How can time for this be built in? Ask supportive family or friends for their help.

Let go of “SHOULD’s” - Let go of expectations for yourself and the child/family about what Christmas should be like or feel like. It is what it is for you and your child/family in that moment and that is more than OK.



FORGET THE NAUGHTY OR NICE LIST! Let your children know that giving and receiving presents is not dependent on them being good. They are loved and worthy of gifts in your family regardless of their behaviour. There is joy in giving.

Keep presents low key. Too many or very expensive gifts can be overwhelming and “too much”, risking the child rejecting or breaking them to regulate their feelings. Limit your spending.



Mindworks—Out of Hours phone line provides advice to parents/carers who are struggling with difficulties and behaviours that could be linked to neurodevelopmental needs eg Autism, ADHD. Skilled and friendly advisors will talk you through ways of calming difficult situations and remind you of your coping strategies. 5pm to 11pm, every day of the year. Call 0300 222 5755