



Christmas survival guide tips



Information Sheet No.6

Parent Tips

"I think the most beneficial thing that I have learnt over the years is to remain **CALM** and remember that Christmas only lasts a few days. If a situation becomes too much, I make sure to remove myself and take a few minutes to gather my thoughts before reacting."

"Something that has really helped us over the Christmas holidays is making time to **RELAX**. There are so many different activities and events going on, it is easy to agree to everything and become overwhelmed. Not to mention the expense of it all. I have learnt that it is okay to say no if things are becoming too much. Christmas free time is really crucial for us as a family."

"A big turning point for us was taking the element of **SURPRISE** out of Christmas. We no longer wrap our son's presents as the stress of the unknown really heightens his anxiety. The same applies to putting up the decorations. We will always allow him to be involved if he wishes, and will give him plenty of warning as to when they are going up, and also when they are being put away."

"It has taken me many years to master, but I have now given up worrying about what other people are doing over Christmas and have started focusing on what **MAKES IT WORK FOR US** as a family. Relatives who aren't so understanding will always question our decisions, but I have learnt to let these comments go."

"We have found several key **STRATEGIES** that seem to work really well for us over the Christmas holidays. Keeping things as "normal" as possible really helps make things more comfortable for our child. If we are eating out anywhere we will always take her preferred cutlery with us, and we've always got a bag of favourite things on hand to keep her happy when we are visiting friends or relatives."

"Asking for **HELP** has always been something I have struggled with which is why I have found online support so beneficial. I have joined some great support groups on Facebook that I can access anytime I may need some extra help over the Christmas break. It is also nice knowing that you are not alone, and that a lot of struggles you may be experiencing others have also gone through themselves."

"I have learnt along the way that **INTRODUCING THINGS GRADUALLY** and letting my son do things when he is ready works much better as it makes Christmas less overwhelming for him. We leave his presents under the tree and let him go to them when he is ready – Sometimes this can take days. To start with we did find it upsetting, but we have learnt to accept that these are the adjustments we need to make in order for Christmas to be more manageable for him."

"When I first heard about the idea of using a visual **TIMETABLE** I wasn't sure how successful it would be for our family, however after giving it a try a couple of years ago it is now such a crucial part of our Christmas. I find we need it more so once Christmas is over, as my daughter really struggles with the festivities being over and things going back to normal. It is also a great way of preparing her for what will be happening when. It certainly reduces her anxiety."

"I think the hardest but most liberating part for me was **ACCEPTING** Christmas wasn't going to be quite as I wanted it to be. It took me a long time to get there, but I now accept that we do things slightly different to others, and that that is okay. It is still enjoyable, which is all that matters to us."