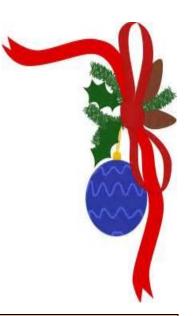
Jane Mitchell 2017

The 12 "Do's" (and "Dont's"!) of Xmas



DO!	DON'T!
Take time to remember that this is a highly stimulating, over-exciting, unpredictable time with sensory overload. (and that's just us!)	Don't have unrealistic expectations of your child(ren)'s ability to cope. Christmas makes stuff harder for them, not easier!
Plan your Christmas – make a visual timetable to increase predictability and stick to it. Keep to usual meal structures as far as possible.	Don't plan surprises and spontaneity unless you know your child(ren) can cope with this.
It is much harder to "let off steam" in the winter. Have winter walks, visits to soft play, Trampoline parks – whatever your child can manage to help them get rid of excess energy.	Don't get too busy around the children or they will ramp up as well. Make sure they are occupied when you are busy, or be prepared to interrupt your activity if you need to help them calm down.
Build in "down time!" give the children (and you) a chance to process and calm down between activities. If you have a busy day, arrange a clear day afterwards.	Don't expect children to understand that this is a "special" day and they should "be good" etc. They are the same children as on every other day. Let's not make it more difficult than it needs to be.

Space out the "fun" events over the Don't worry if they hate a traditional coming weeks. Make it dinner. Its fine to have chicken manageable. le visit to Santa one noodles instead. If you are eating week, decorate tree following week, Dinner away from home, plan visit to relatives week after. ahead and ignore the tutting! Timetable your jobs. Reduce your Don't sweat the small stuff! (Try) and stress! Prioritise – what can you let let all those annoying little things slide over the Christmas period? float over your head. Ask for a supporter or partner to help Don't worry if they hunt out all their out with child(ren) if you have an gifts ahead of time. Surprises can be unavoidably busy day. hard to manage, as can uncertainty about whether they will get the gift they have set their heart on. Have the Christmas you want – not Don't put presents under the tree the one you feel you should have (or until the last minute (when they are the one presented by M & S et al...). in bed, Xmas eve). Or be prepared to have them all opened to check contents... Remember if this is your first Don't be surprised if there is a melt-Christmas with a child or children down on Xmas day, even when you (just for this year) keep it as calm, got everything they wanted. Think simple and fuss free as possible. Find now about how you might respond out as much as you can about how therapeutically and empathically in that situation. If in doubt, just let previous Christmases were for them in case there are any specific them know that you can see they are having a difficult time right now. triggers. Don't worry, as you can help with some of their muddled feelings. Christmas can get a bit too big and exciting sometimes. Lets just sit quietly away from everyone for a bit until you feel better. Take time out for you. If necessary Don't worry if things go wrong. book a day (or two) just to look after Those are the things that make up yourself and build up your reserves our memories later and give us before Christmas while the little ones things to laugh about. Also any

(or big ones!) are still at school. Use this time to do things that will nurture you.	mistakes give us an opportunity to show our children how to learn and be resilient from our mistakes.
Use the opportunity to play silly games, laugh, connect, enjoy your family, watch daft TV, stay in your PJs all over boxing day	Don't use Santa's naughty and nice sheet as a threat. Or any other threat. Christmas is a wonderful opportunity to have truly unconditional gestures of regard and affection.
And finally – remember to pause before you react, breathe, and Keep Calm – its only Christmas.	Don't forget to have fun! Carve out an hour for you and your partner (if appropriate) at some time over the Festive season.