

Why Christmas Could Feel Too Much for Little Ones



Christmas can sometimes be overwhelming for young children, leading to sudden meltdowns and difficulty settling. This happens because the season often disrupts the foundational emotional and physical needs children rely on to feel safe and regulated.

Why Children Might Get Overwhelmed:

The core needs disrupted are:

1. Disappearance of Routine (Need for Security)

Children thrive on predictability; structure is their safety net. Christmas removes this: routines vanish, bedtimes are erratic, and travel/unfamiliar houses become common. This instability shakes their crucial need for Security.

- **Advice:** Families should anchor the chaos by keeping key times (mealtimes, wind-down routines) as consistent as possible.



2. Sensory Overload (Need for Privacy)

The season is a sensory explosion—flashing lights, loud music, crowded places. Constant, high-level stimulation quickly overcooks the nervous system. The sheer joy can quickly tip into physical dysregulation and exhaustion.

- **Advice:** Recommend a "Calm Corner"—a designated retreat (like a cosy beanbag) offering crucial Privacy and a chance to truly decompress.

3. Feeling Out of Control (Need for Control)

High social expectations ("Give Grandma a hug!") and being pushed into situations without warning increase stress. Children need a degree of Control over their bodies and environment.

- **Advice:** Families should talk through plans before they happen (e.g., briefing on guests and leaving time). Encourage small choices ("hug or high-five?").



Finding the Balance: Grounding and Connection

To support a child through the emotional complexity of Christmas, prioritise their fundamental needs for Emotional Connection and Movement.

- **Prioritise Connection Over Presents:** Encourage parents to weave in 'Micro Moments' of connection—five minutes of fully present attention, a shared giggle, or a quiet cuddle. These moments are profoundly regulating.
- **Balance Sugar with Movement:** Actively schedule Movement (like a brisk walk or game of chase) to burn off energy and counteract the impact of festive treats on energy and sleep.

By providing small anchors and moments of connection, we help young children move through the season feeling more grounded, confident, and genuinely happy.

 Happy Holidays

