

Mrs Dowdell's Parenting Pointers

Christmas Survival Tips

At this time of year we're surrounded by Christmas advertising displaying an unrealistic level of perfection. Sorry to break this to you but your Christmas won't be perfect! Someone will probably be ill, family members will fall out, the roast potatoes may not crisp to perfection. How can we manage expectations and ensure we can all enjoy ourselves, even if things don't go quite to plan?

We need to be kind to ourselves. Make time for you. If you're able to, make the most of the time the children are in school and go for a walk or have coffee with a friend. Lock the bathroom door and take a bath. Listen to some music or read a good book once the children are in bed. Share out the jobs and keep things simple. Your family want to spend time with you, not see you stressed out and tied to the kitchen.



Talk with children about expectations with regards to their behaviour. We know they are experiencing that toxic mix of tiredness and excitement and we can help them find strategies to calm down if it all gets too much. We need to make sure we are not expecting them to be perfect. Yes, I know it's embarrassing when they always play up in front of the in-laws but it's Christmas! If you know that you are doing your best, don't let the judgement of aging relatives make you overreact and get upset.

Share plans for Christmas Day so that children know what will happen and when. Obviously they'll want to know when they can open their presents but we can also talk about meal timings, when the grandparents may be arriving/leaving etc. If we communicate what is likely to happen this can help our children to cope and this is especially important for children with additional needs. Once my children were old enough to tell the time, we agreed a time when they were allowed to bring their stockings into our bedroom. Before this time they were expected to stay quietly in their rooms because Daddy and Mummy wanted to have a nice Christmas day too, and being woken every half hour from 3am onwards to hear that Santa has been doesn't make for happy parents! (Our children discovered this the hard way!)



It's fun to invent your own Family Christmas traditions. They don't have to be big or expensive, perhaps take a walk or a drive to look at the Christmas lights around your area? Do you have a tradition of always have the same Christmas Eve supper or Christmas Day breakfast? What will you leave out for Santa? Maybe you always play a mammoth game of monopoly or do a huge jigsaw puzzle together. Think about building some traditions that involve getting out in the fresh air. In our family we always go for a Boxing Day walk before returning to gorge ourselves on leftovers. These traditions are very powerful for children. They create special shared memories and strengthen family bonds.

Finally, Christmas can be a very emotive time. We may be remembering loved ones no longer with us. We may be struggling to balance our finances. We may be worried about what the next year has in store. All these anxieties can cause us to take out our frustrations on those nearest and dearest to us. I'd love to help if I can, so if you are struggling with any of the above, do get in touch.

Got any questions? Need any help or advice? E-mail me at parenting@foundrylaneprimary.co.uk