Christmas Newsletter

The information contained within this newsletter can be adapted for use at any time regardless of any diagnosis.

(Sorry if that word fills you with dread)

Some great suggestions for gift ideas from Contact - for families with disabled children | Contact www.contact.org.uk

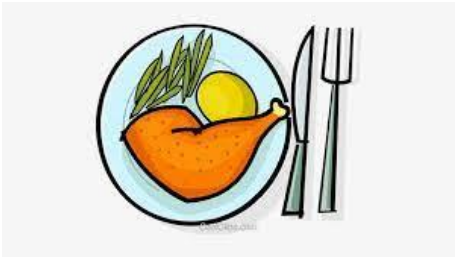
On the run-up to Christmas, the non-profit shop Fledglings has put together a Top Christmas Gift Picks selection brimming with gift ideas! So don't wait and get a head start on your Christmas shopping list! www.fledglings.org.uk

Christmas Top Tips

Before you wrap the presents up:

- Replace shop batteries with longer lasting ones (if you want the noise to last longer that is).
- Remove all packaging ties for speed and safety.
- Sometimes we, as parents, have ideas about how Christmas 'should be'. This might be traditions that have been passed down or family customs that we think make Christmas special. Having Christmas traditions and customs can help Christmas be more predictable for children with additional needs, but sometimes we have to adapt them or invent new ones that suit the needs of our own children. So if you know your child might struggle with a Christmas tradition consider doing things a different way, to reduce the stress, and hopefully everyone will have a more enjoyable day.

Offer suggestions to family / friends for gifts, create wish lists on Amazon etc. and share the link. This will save embarrassment when the child opens a thoughtful present from a relative and discovers it isn't something they are keen on but also helps you to manage their needs. Some children ask for things like sellotape, paper to cut up, multiple pots of bubbles etc. for Christmas as that is what makes them happy! If it is safe and makes them happy, does it matter what it is?

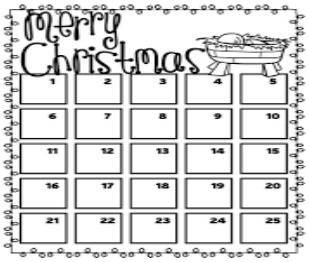


If your child will only eat chicken dippers, plain pasta, cheese and tomato pizza etc. and the thought of trying to get them to eat a roast turkey dinner makes you laugh hysterically, let them eat what they **will** eat.

Don't forget to remove the snaps out the crackers if this might upset them too.

Use a visual calendar to show them key dates in the build up to Christmas.

These could include:



- When you put the tree up. If you need to rearrange furniture to make room for the tree, this could impact on how your child uses the space. Consider turning the tree lights off and keeping some spaces in the house decoration free if you think too much would overwhelm your child.
- School performances. Some schools have Nativity / Christmas plays, Christmas Fair etc.
- Family trips like panto / Father Christmas visit etc. Some theatres host Sensory friendly performances. Check your local theatre for details.
- Visits from / to relatives / any parties.
- School term dates.
- When they can open presents. Just because the expectation is that presents are opened on Christmas day, it doesn't mean your children have to. Start your own traditions by doing all Christmas things the way your family needs them to be rather than going with other people's expectations.

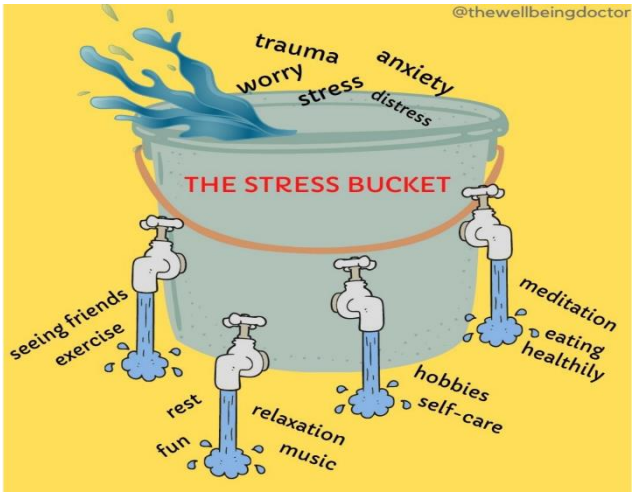
A timetable for Christmas day might also help some children, particularly if your routines for the day are different to your usual ones. The timetable would be different for every family but might include:

- Earliest getting up time!
- Breakfast time
- Lunch time (even if the child is not eating)
- Present opening times
- Any planned visits or telephone calls to or from relatives
- Any films or tv programmes that are important to the young person
- If you plan to go for walk, or play outside with new toys, add this to the day
- Bed time (if there is a fixed one)
- Include other activities or plans that have a fixed time

If you feel you are struggling and need support for your own mental health, please speak to your GP.

For urgent mental health advice and support call 0800 953 0110

For a range of mental health support charities please go to www.mentalhealth-uk.org



Different forms of recommendations

Carol Gray- Social Stories

Carol is best known for the development of Social Stories, a respected evidence-based practice used worldwide with people with autism of all ages. Carol is also known for initiating a very effective social philosophy that 1) 'abandons all assumptions', 2) regards both the typical and autism perspective as 'equally valid', and 3) recognizes the 'social impairment in autism' as shared (noting the well-intentioned but nonetheless misguided mistakes of parents and professionals). She has completed ground breaking work on some of the toughest topics in autism by reviewing the research, developing new theories, and proposing practical instructional strategies, most notably Gray's Guide to Bullying (2004) and Gray's Guide to Loss, Learning, and Students with ASD (2003).
https://carolgraysocialstories.com

Visual supports

Visual supports are a communication tool that can be used with everybody. They can be used in most situations, are adaptable and portable. https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/communication/communication-tools/visual-supports