

## Wind down at Christmas

**The weeks running up to Christmas can be hectic for early years practitioners, with coming to the end of term, holding Christmas parties, nativities and concerts for parents, and caring for very excitable children!**

It's therefore really important to plan experiences and activities to help children (and staff!) feel calm and relaxed whilst still enjoying the festivities and excitement in the lead up to 'the big day'.

The emotional and physical environment can have a big effect on children's behaviour so it is helpful to think about what your physical environment is saying to children. Consider how you create a calm atmosphere through this busy time by following these top tips to help children wind down in the run-up to Christmas:



- Make a den with soft cushions, blankets and materials
- Add torches, Christmas lights and soft lighting to create a calm, warm atmosphere
- Have a range of books that capture children's interest on a theme of Christmas or winter
- Play Christmas music or children's favourite songs in the background
- Sing carols and favourite festive songs
- Create a sensory basket full of shiny, glittery objects for children to explore
- Plan a pyjama day where children (and staff) feel cosy and relaxed and enjoy interactive activities together such as sharing stories, rhymes and songs
- Encourage children to engage in physical activity outside in the fresh air to help them to 'blow off steam' and aid a good night's sleep
- Make reindeer dust with the children by mixing oatmeal and glitter, then take torches outside for children to sprinkle it outdoors at dusk.

Whilst for many people Christmas is a very exciting time for some, for others, it can be a time of change and uncertainty. For example, talking about celebrations and events, changes of routine, increased noise and excitement brings increased levels of stress and anxiety for some children with autism.