

Disclaimer: Activities with children must always be risk assessed, including for allergies or choking. Children must always have adequate supervision.
Resources and materials must always be appropriate for children's age and stage of development.

Activity: Creating a cosy space for big emotions

Creating a calm space in your setting helps children manage their emotions during exciting times like Christmas. This cosy area, filled with cushions, soft lighting, and soothing sensory items, provides a quiet retreat where children can reflect and relax.

By recognising their feelings and having a peaceful place to unwind, children can build resilience.

Learning aims

- To create a safe, calming space for children to practice emotional regulation and co-regulation with adults.

Resources

- Blankets and sheets
- Fairy lights or battery-operated twinkle lights
- Cushions
- Calming music and a player/speaker
- Selection of books..



Activity outline

1. **Talking about emotions:** Begin by discussing emotions with the children, using visual aids like emotion cards or a storybook, to help them identify feelings such as excitement, happiness, or nervousness. Use this opportunity to normalise big emotions by explaining that it's perfectly natural to feel both excited and anxious, especially during exciting times like Christmas. Encourage children to share their feelings, modelling if required by sharing examples from your own life, fostering a supportive and understanding environment
2. **Create a cosy den:** Introduce the idea of making a cosy den to help us feel happy and calm. Ask the children what they think would make the den a welcoming and calm space for them. Collaboratively construct the den using blankets, cushions, and furniture encouraging teamwork and sharing ideas. Invite the children to choose things from the nursery that make them feel calm, such as fidget toys and sensory bottles etc. Include sensory items like soft fabrics, twinkly lights and soft music to create a calming atmosphere. Invite the children to make

Disclaimer: Activities with children must always be risk assessed, including for allergies or choking. Children must always have adequate supervision. Resources and materials must always be appropriate for children's age and stage of development.

pictures which you can display to give them ownership of their space. Model what makes you feel happy and calm to inspire their contributions

3. **Using the space:** Once the den is complete emphasise that it is a special place for feeling calm and relaxed. Model calming techniques such as deep breathing, reading quietly, or listening to music together. Over time, add new items to the den, based on the children's preferences and their feedback. Encourage reflection by discussing when they might use the den in the future such as when they feel, worried or need a quiet moment helping them to recognise and respond to their emotional needs.

Extension ideas:

- Make sensory bottles to add to their den
- Share this idea with parents, as they may wish to create a den at home for their children to use when they need a calm moment.

NDNA products to support you with this activity:

- [Children's Well-being – publication](#)