MAKING IT THROUGH THE CHRISTMAS SEASON

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MAKING IT THROUGH THE CHRISTMAS SEASON

Compensate for IMMATURETY

Work with EMOTIONS
Help children find their TEARS
Prioritize ATTACHMENT
Make time for PLAY

COMPENSATE FOR IMMATURETY

Children with Special Needs
- Often have delays in the development of the
  - Pre-frontal Cortex and possibly the Hippocampus and Cerebellum
- Causes difficulty with “Executive Functioning”,
  - memory, problem solving, planning, impulsivity

HOLIDAY SEASON
- More excitement
- Change in routine
- Emotions are heightened

WHAT HAPPENS IN THE BRAIN
- Emotions get activated
- Prefrontal Cortex get hijacked

RESULT – BEHAVIOUR CHALLENGES INCREASE!

WORK WITH EMOTIONS

THE HOLIDAY SEASON INCREASES EMOTIONS

Joy
Excitement
Anticipation
Trepidation

Alarm
Frustration
Futility
Sadness and tears

The Limbic System (emotional centre in the brain) does not distinguish emotions – just emotional activation

Emotions can FLIP/FLOP easily and often causing much confusion!

BE PREPARED!!

WORK WITH EMOTIONS

CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR VENTING and
RELEASE

- Bubble-wrap stomping
- Egg carton crushing
- Jumping on a trampoline
- Pool-noodle sword fighting
- Pool-noodle drumming
- Push and pull

PROVIDE LOTS OF TIME FOR PLAY!

FRUSTRATION

WHAT HAPPENS IN THE BRAIN

- Emotions get activated
- Prefrontal Cortex get hijacked

RESULT – BEHAVIOUR CHALLENGES INCREASE!

COMPENSATE FOR IMMATURETY

ANTICIPATE & PREVENT

- When does my child have a difficult time?
- Where does my child have a difficult time?
- With whom does my child have a difficult time?

What can the adults do to make it easier for the child to cope with what is expected?
- Maintain routines as much as possible.
- After an exciting event, plan some “down time”.
- If you can, avoid situations that can cause problems.
- Have an exit plan.
**Christmas Season**

**Eva de Gosztonyi, psychologist, Neufeld Institute**

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**WORK WITH EMOTIONS**

*He's making a list, he's checking it twice, going to find out who's naughty and nice."

*He knows if you've been bad or good, so be good for goodness sake.*

The elf is watching. He'll tell Santa how you are behaving.

These just increase **Alarm** and **Pursuit**, but remember, **Frustration** is there too - ready to "rear its ugly head."

**ALARM** \[\Rightarrow\] **GOOD BEHAVIOUR** \[\Rightarrow\] **MORE MELTDOWNS**

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**HELP CHILDREN FIND THEIR TEARS**

Create opportunities for feeling sadness

- Watch sad movies
- Read sad stories
- Make the time to SIT with tears no matter how "silly" or "insignificant" the reason. There are many "big" reasons to cry at this time but sometimes it starts with the little things, like not getting the "right" present.

How to help yourself "be with" while your child has their sadness and tears

I am helping my child to grieve for all the things s/he CANNOT change so s/he can become RESILIENT.

I am helping my child to grieve for how scary the world is so s/he can find the COURAGE to keep on.

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**PRIORITIZE ATTACHMENT**

If separation is used
- to keep other children safe
- so that you can find your tempering element
- because you are human

**BRIDGE** what could **DIVIDE**

- We're OK. We'll find a way to make things better.
- I didn't mean to yell at you. I'll find another way to let you know what I expect.

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**WORDS OF WISDOM FROM SANTA**

"Gifts are given from the heart. If we want to teach our children generosity and kindness, we should not make them have to earn their gifts."

"All children really want to be kind and good and you can always try again tomorrow. It's OK to make mistakes."

Rewards do not change a brain. Nor do they cause an immature brain to mature. A child can "act good" to earn something. But most children will spontaneously "be good" if they can. However, emotions and immaturity often make that difficult for them.

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**Have FUN with the ELF.**

Where is he?
How did she get there?
Where is he going next?
What did she see on the way?
Write a message to Santa.

Keep things simple with the ELF
Some families do ELF only on weekends.

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Treat the need for Attachment like the need for food
a) provide MORE than what is asked for
b) provide it GENEROUSLY

**SO THAT ATTACHMENT NEEDS ARE FULFILLED**

Make attachment UNCONDITIONAL

Children are not meant to have to WORK for attachment. When they are working, they are not growing.

a) avoid making relationship dependent on rewards.
b) Provide MORE attachment when behaviour is at its worst.
When children play alone, they are creating an identity, or they are working through their emotions.

When children play with each other, they practice getting along with another, and/or are working through their emotions.

When children play with adults, attachment increases, and they are working through their emotions.

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What about me?

• Identify your own support system, your “village”
  o your family
  o your partner
  o your friends
• Give yourself permission to vent
• Find your own sadness and tears (watch sad movies – TV shows)
• Nurture your passions – have some “PLAY TIME”

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Final thoughts

It is only in the context of a safe attachment that children can grow and develop.

Provide generously

Forgive easily

Feel your sadness

Have faith in nature’s plan

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