



MAKING IT THROUGH THE CHRISTMAS SEASON

Eva de Gosztonyi,
psychologist
Faculty, NEUFELD INSTITUTE

eva@neufeldinstitute.com
www.ideacentreforeducators.org
www.neufeldinstitute.org
www.cebm.ca

1

MAKING IT THROUGH THE CHRISTMAS SEASON

Compensate for IMMATURITY

Work with EMOTIONS

Help children find their TEARS

Prioritize ATTACHMENT

Make time for PLAY

2

COMPENSATE FOR IMMATURITY

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!

3

COMPENSATE FOR IMMATURITY

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**.

4

WORK WITH EMOTIONS

THE HOLIDAY SEASON INCREASES EMOTIONS

➤ Joy	➤ Alarm
➤ Excitement	➤ Frustration
➤ Anticipation	➤ Futility
➤ Trepidation	➤ 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!!


5

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

FRUSTRATION




PROVIDE LOTS OF TIME FOR PLAY!


6

WORK WITH EMOTIONS

BEWARE



"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 → **GOOD BEHAVIOUR** → **FRUSTRATION** → **MORE MELTDOWNS**

PURSUIT →

7

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."*

If someone tells Santa about a child's bad behaviour he says,
"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. **a**

8

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.

9

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.

10

PRIORITIZE ATTACHMENT

Treat the need for Attachment like the need for food

- provide MORE than what is asked for
- 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.

- avoid making relationship dependent on rewards.
- Provide MORE attachment when behaviour is at its worst.

11

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

- REASSURE
- REPAIR

- 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.

12

MAKE TIME FOR PLAY	
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, <u>attachment</u> increases, and they are working through their emotions.	

13

WHAT ABOUT ME?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify your own support system, your "village" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ your family ○ your partner ○ 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"



14

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

15