

# 12 days of Christmas wellbeing for your child

With so much to think about over the festive period, it's important to make time for your family's wellbeing. Here are 12 easy ideas to help boost your child's emotional wellbeing and help them have a positive Christmas experience.

## 1 Make a Christmas activity calendar

In the run up to Christmas, normal routines often get forgotten in a whirlwind of festive activities. But with so much going on, how can you make sure your child feels comfortable and able to be involved as they want to be? It can be helpful to create a family Christmas activity calendar - then stick it on a wall so everyone can see what's happening and when. Who will be in the house? What's planned for each day? Talk to your child about what they would like to be involved in.

## 2 Get creative with homemade decorations

Ask your child to help you make some homemade Christmas decorations. Getting creative is thought to be good for emotional wellbeing, and gives you a chance to spend more time with your child and find out how they're doing. Try using wrapping paper to make snowflakes (fold the paper into a small triangle, then cut little pieces out of the edges), or create an angel or snowman from whatever you have in the house. Another idea is to cut Christmas cards into festive shapes, then thread string through them and hang them up.

## 3 Do something good

Research suggests that doing good deeds can actually [help improve mental and emotional wellbeing](#). So, this Christmas, encourage your child to think about giving, rather than getting. This could be helping a neighbour with a job, a random act of kindness when out and about, supporting a friend or donating to charity. Ask your child if they have any of their own ideas, and afterwards ask them to reflect on how helping someone else made them feel. Focusing on doing good in this way is helpful practice for building empathy and caring relationships.

#### **4 Set aside time to relax**

Christmas can be hectic so encourage your child to put aside some time for activities they find calming. You could also try showing them some relaxation techniques. For example, ask your child to imagine there is a balloon in their stomach. Get them to take a big breath through their nose, filling up the balloon so their stomach puffs up, then breathe out slowly until all the air is out of the balloon. If helpful, they can count to four in their head on the way in, and four on the way out. Doing this a few times can help bring a sense of calm in more stressful moments.

#### **5 Switch off the tech**

Turn off your tech and spend a few hours doing something together as a family. Sit and talk, do something active, or play a board game. Even better, cook something together or do a jigsaw puzzle - creating something together in this way can give you a sense of achievement, and build collaboration skills. This is a great way to have some quality time with your child, as well as boosting emotional wellbeing through social interaction.

#### **6 Take a mindful moment**

Making a conscious effort to be more aware of what's happening in the present moment can help us appreciate our experiences more fully. If you notice your child is worrying about things in the past or about what could happen in the future, get them to try an activity to help root them in the present moment. The simple act of colouring in, for example, can take the attention away from ourselves and so bring a calming effect. Or get them to pick one of their favourite songs and focus entirely on where the music takes them.

#### **7 Learn something new together**

Find a topic or skill you would both like to learn about - then find out as much as you can about it. Maybe your child is interested in your family history, would like to know more about something they heard in a class at school, or wants to know more about a certain part of the world. The process can help them build self-esteem and confidence by getting them to expand their knowledge and challenge themselves.

## **8 Reflect on 2020**

With your child, reflect on how your year has gone. What were the funniest, strangest, and most memorable things that happened? Share the things that made you laugh, and ask them to share theirs. Did they learn anything that they'd like to take with them into next year? What do they think has helped them grow? Help them to think about how much they've developed as a person, and remember the positive things about 2020 even if they've faced challenges.

## **9 Enjoy December in the great outdoors**

Get outside and take note of how the seasons have changed the landscape around you. If possible, find a green space and head there (getting out into nature is good for wellbeing). Spend a bit of time out and about and take the opportunity to see if you can find any natural materials to help decorate your home. Twigs and branches, holly, ivy and pinecones can all be used to brighten up your house. If they don't look festive enough in their natural state, add a bit of silver or gold spray later. Just make sure you warm up when you get home!

## **10 Find out more about each other**

Play a game with your child to get to know each other better. What's their favourite film, colour, animal, or food? Ask them to help you choose some interesting topics. If you want, you could write some questions out on pieces of paper or card, shuffle them up, and take it in turns to pick one at random. See if there's anything you hadn't realised about each other before.

## **11 Identify what they're going to try in 2021**

Ask your child to think about what they'd like to achieve in 2021. Do they have any new activities they want to try? Are there any goals they can set for themselves? What would make them feel happy, and fulfilled? Once you've got a few ideas, talk with them about how they might go about doing these things. Guide them to make sure their expectations are realistic and that they're focusing on things that they feel will have a positive impact on their life.

## **12 Make the decision to 'let it go'**

Get your child to write down the thoughts and feelings they had in 2020 that had an impact on them. Encourage them to reflect on the ups and downs, and how they've reacted to them. They might like to express this in one or two words, in pictures, or in whole paragraphs - whatever they feel most comfortable with. Then get them to close the book and let it go.