

Checklist: Helping children navigate big feelings during the festive season



This checklist can support parents, carers and professionals as children move through the excitement and challenges of Christmas and the summer break.

Before the day or event

	Talk through what will happen in simple, clear steps.
	Use a visual schedule or countdown to help prepare for changes.
	Pack comfort items such as a favourite toy, headphones, or a sensory tool.
	Plan breaks or quiet time before things get too busy.
	Check in with the child about any worries or questions.

During busy moments

	Keep routines steady where possible (sleep, meals, rest).
	Offer choices to give a sense of control, such as where to sit or when to take a break.
	Watch for early signs of overwhelm like withdrawal, irritability or restlessness.
	Move to a quieter space if needed.
	Allow children time to settle without pressure.

When big feelings show up

	Stay calm and speak gently.
	Name the emotion: "It looks like you're feeling upset/tired/worried."
	Reassure them that feelings are normal and safe.
	Offer grounding activities such as deep breathing, a short walk, or sensory play.
	Give them space while staying close and supportive.

After the moment has passed

	Reflect together: "What helped you feel better?"
	Reinforce that all feelings are okay.
	Revisit plans or routines if something needs adjusting for next time.
	Celebrate small wins, such as asking for help or taking a break.