

Preparing for the Holidays, Christmas and Family Gatherings

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Introduction

- Why things go pear shaped
- Why other people don't cope
- How we can help ourselves, our kids, siblings and other people



Routines and Structure Evaporate

- School
- Sports groups
- Clubs
- Churches
- School
- Home



Take Inventory

- Reflect
- What has worked?
- What hasn't worked?
- Why?



Albert Einstein -

"To do the same thing over and over again and to expect a different result is the definition of insanity."



Post Stress Model

- Window of tolerance
- Time in not, time out
- Proactive
- You can't always be there



- Window of tolerance
 - What is yours?
 - What is there's?
 - What is the extended families?
 - What is their siblings?



Time In Not Time Out

- Time out increases anxiety and challenging behaviours
- Time out excludes and creates gapping divides
- Often time out is in an unfamiliar space with heightened and embarrassed parents who can't co-regulate



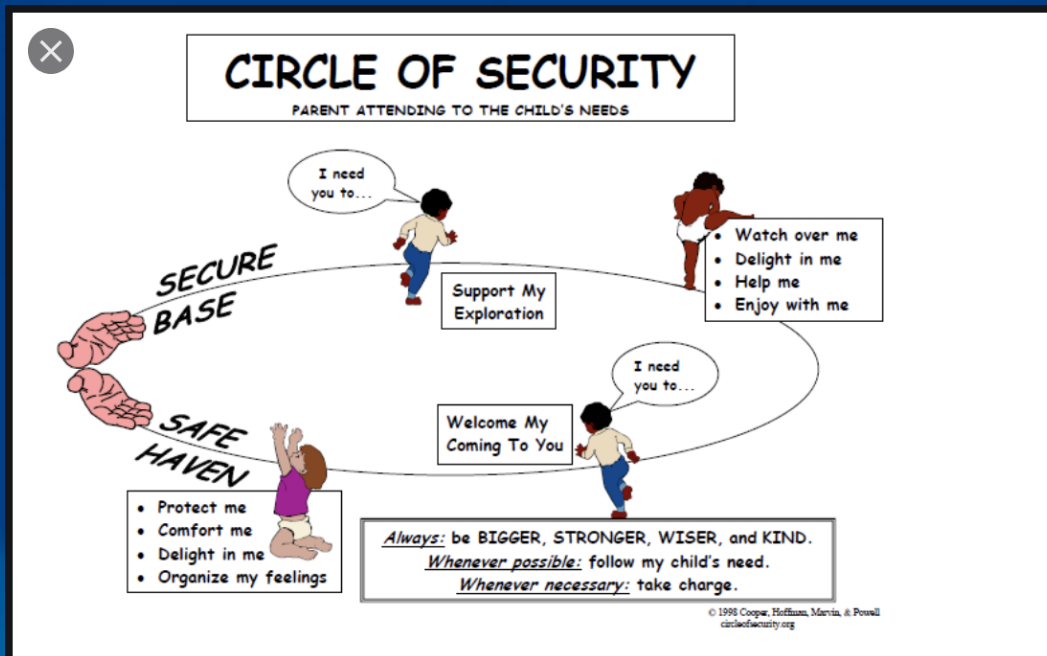
Proactive

- We need to change up what we do:
 - Numbers of people
 - How we do gifts
 - How we do travel
 - Where we stay
 - How long we go for
 - How long we stay
 - How we communicate with family and friends



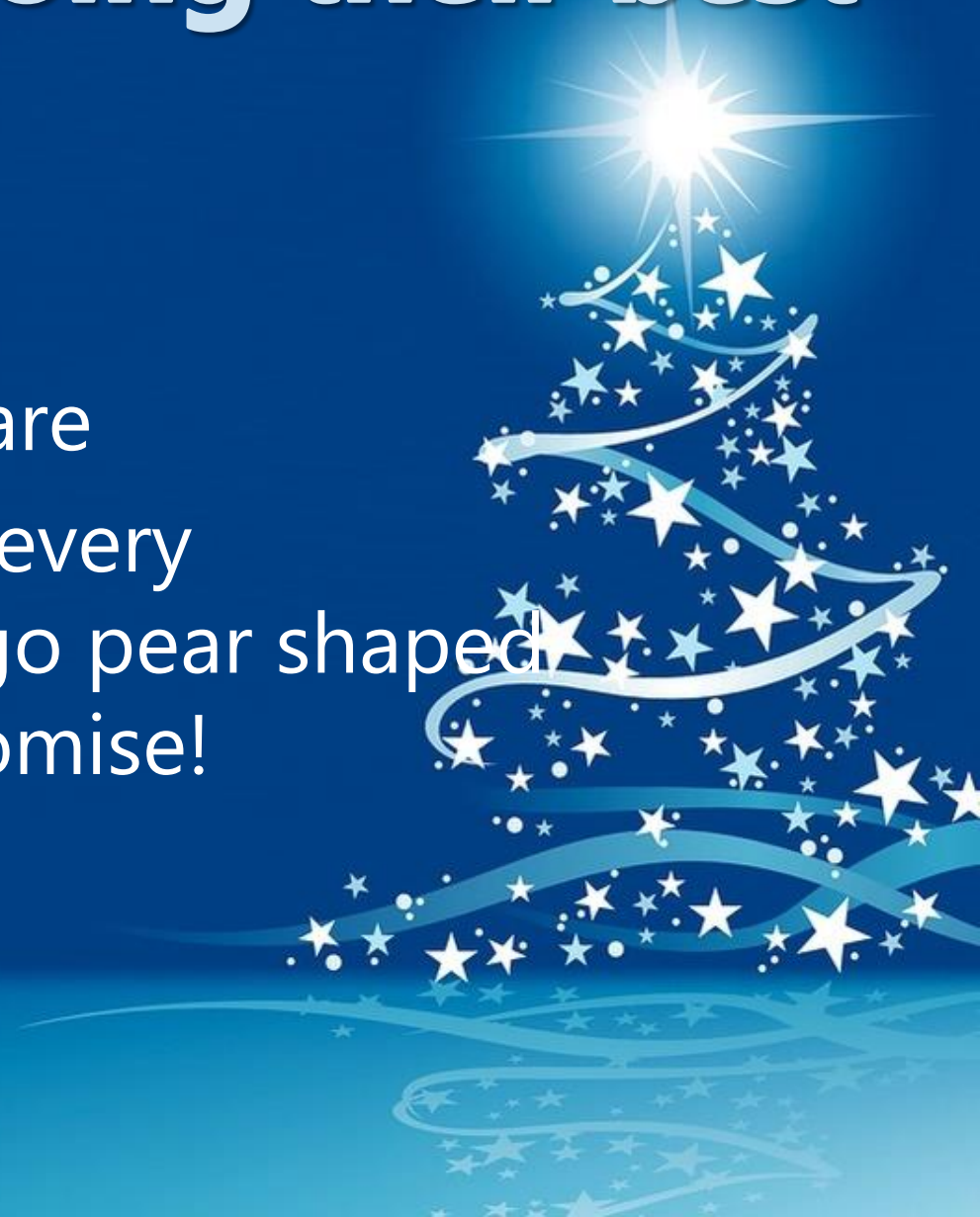
You Can't Always Be There

- Neurotypical kids follow the circle of security



Everyone is doing their best

- You are!
- Your child is!
- Your other children are
- You cannot plan for every contingency- it will go pear shaped at some point – I promise!



The Lead Up

- Start doing 4-7-8 breathing NOW!
- It calms the amygdala
- Be mindful of required support with sleep and fatigue
- Increase protein and water
- Remind them of the Christmas day plan or the trip away plan



The Night Before

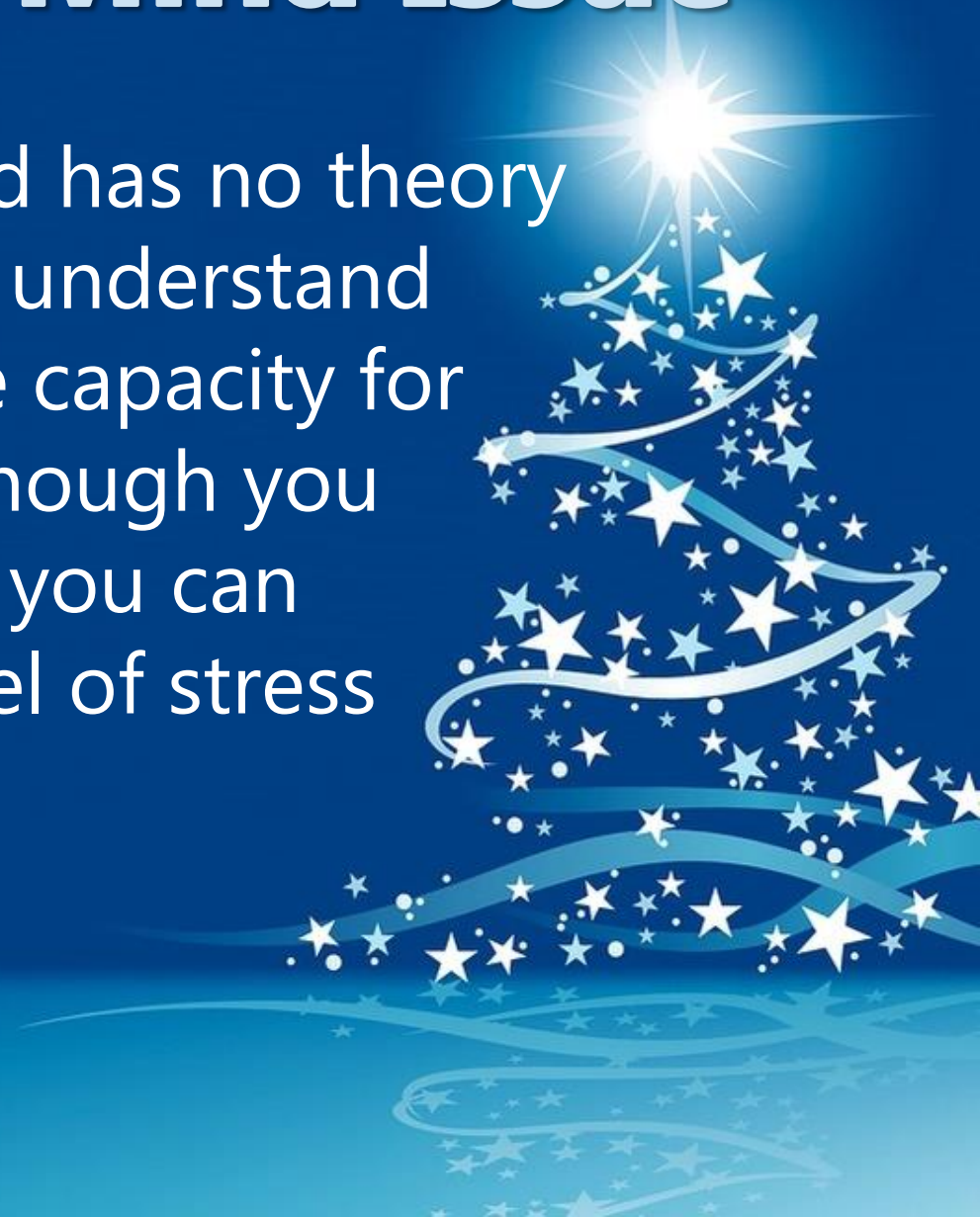
- Plan and let them know what is going to happen
- We are going to have showers and get into our Christmas pj's
- We are to have yummy food for dinner. A familiar thing that they find comforting- nuggets and chips rule ;-)
- We are going to sit and do a Christmas movie or Star wars or ben 10 or the nightmare before Christmas or Frozen or Anime on you tube- if you don't think they can settle go for a huge walk earlier or a swim.
- Then we are turning off the big lights and we are going to watch the tree lights for a little while
- I'm going to come and lie with you for half an hour or until you are feeling dozy and relaxed

Your child can only
be as calm as you
are!



Theory of Mind Issue

- Remember your child has no theory of mind and doesn't understand that you do have the capacity for empathy and even though you aren't melting down you can understand their level of stress



The Morning

- Get up EARLY!!!!!!!
- Have a quiet cuppa
- Go and sit with your child
- Gently wake them
- Give them a good breakfast keep the junk down, it wont help anyone



Gifts and Surprises

- Wrapped
- Unwrapped
- Under the tree early
- None at all under the tree until they are asleep
- Tell them what their present is in advance



Siblings

- Often get overlooked
- Find them a champion
- Bring them in on the plan
- Explain what you are doing and why
- Give them a melt down safety box
- Have a plan so they don't miss out

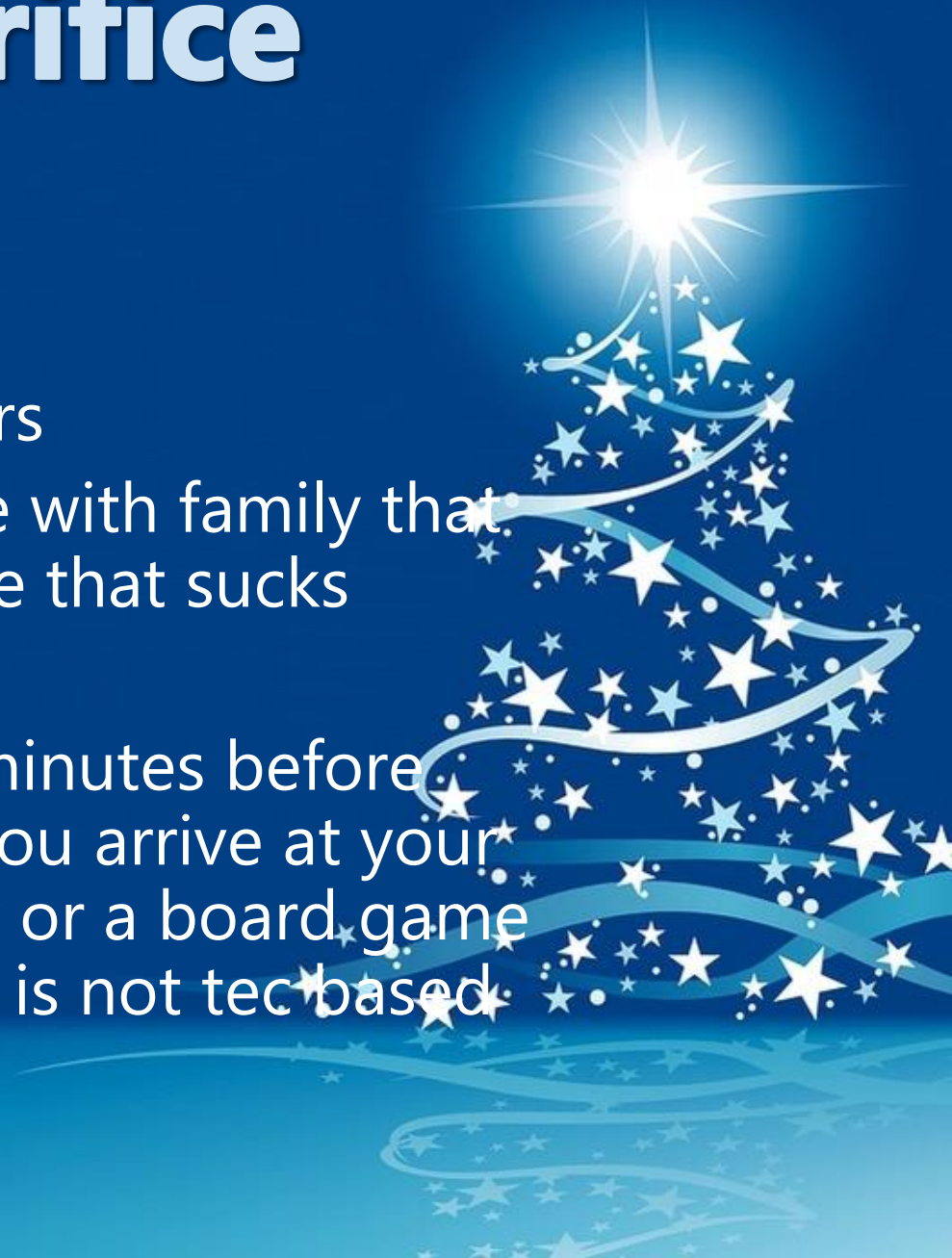


Extended Family

- Prepare them- tell them the plan and why
- Take food and items that are familiar to your child
- Be firm- with the adults
- Tell them your behavior therapist said-
- they can ring me if they like;-)

Sacrifice

- It sucks
- It is not fair
- Remember previous years
- A little bit of quality time with family that works, is better than time that sucks
- Stagger family visits
- Turn off devices etc 30 minutes before guests arrive or before you arrive at your destination. Play eye spy or a board game or preferred activity that is not tech based.



References:

Brian Post: How to turn holiday stress into peaceful family time.

Brian Post: The great behaviour breakdown

Heather. T .Forbes:

Beyond consequences, logic and control

Kelly Mahler:

Interoception: the eighth sensory system.



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