

A SHORT GUIDE ON HOW TO TRANSITION BACK TO LIFE AFTER THE FESTIVE SEASON

The run up to Christmas starts quite a few weeks before. The shops are filled with sweet treats, decorations, present ideas and every little thing one may need to get ready for the big day. The good thing about this is that we have time to plan a Christmas celebration that meets our needs.

There is time to process the changes in the environments around us, yet the demands and anticipation can make things very difficult.

The transition into the festive season feels quite gradual, whereas it's over in a flash and we are all meant to just go back to normal.



.. so what now? How do we manage the transitions? How do we gracefully get back into our sense or normality? How do we try to prevent further overwhelm or burnout? How do we reset our nervous systems and honour our needs?

The aim of this short guide is to help you and your family transition back to life once the seasonal festivities are over, through looking at practical strategies.



Every family is different, and meeting everyone's needs can be quite challenging at times. **How do we go about making sure the transitions back run as smoothly as possible?**



✨ DO WHAT FEELS RIGHT ✨

External pressures, demands and expectations are forever bombarding our nervous system, so it's important to remember what feels right to us. It's how the saying goes :

“If it doesn't feel right, it probably isn't.”

Prioritising mental, physical and emotional well-being are the cornerstones to keeping yourself and your family safe.

I've put together a few tips to help you navigate this :

- “No” is a full sentence. If something doesn't align with what your family needs this is all the answer you need to give.
- Meeting your family's needs comes in different forms: you might want to engage in various activities that were simply too busy during the peak festive season, or you may just need to remain in your safe environment a while longer.
- Let go of external validation : you know your family dynamic best. You know what works and what doesn't. You do you.
- You may need to lock away all the decorations (if you had any) in one fell swoop as if they were never there, or you may need to start readjusting the environment back to normal gradually.
- Consider the cost : adapt your expectations and consider the emotional, mental, physical and sensory costs. This will help you shift your focus to connection, safety and collaboration.



✨ MAINTAIN BOUNDARIES ✨

Boundaries are about you and your family - about what you need and are comfortable with. You are not setting them to shut others out, but to explain how to enter your space and be welcomed. **Boundaries are put in place to respect each other's needs and differences.**

Key points to help you maintain boundaries :

- Boundaries are not seasonal. You have worked hard through the run up and during the festive season and they must remain in place afterwards too.
- Honour your family's needs and validate their feelings : do they wish to resume social engagements? Do they have the capacity to process the environments that are changing yet again? Do they need rest and recovery?
- Pay attention to how and when things become too much and adjust the boundaries to meet the fluctuating needs.
- Consider and respect all aspects of boundaries : physical, mental and emotional.
 - Keep advocating for yourself and your family.



✨ GIVE YOURSELF TIME ✨

Recovery should not have a time limit. Give yourself time and space to recharge, calm your nervous system and find your balance again. How you and your family do this, is completely up to you, **however here's some ideas to get you started :**

- Set yourself and your family time aside consciously : you can maybe plan to do something together that brings you all joy, or maybe each member needs time and space alone to find their glimmers.
- Remember that capacity fluctuates, so some days will run smoother than others. Take it one step and one day at a time.
- Understand and validate your present : this means evaluating the present state without thinking into the future and how that may look like. Focus on the needs that must be met now.
- What's the rush? Giving and your family time helps you create a stress-free transition, while removing any pressures and demands.
- Do not set yourself or your family any arbitrary internal deadlines : these have no real basis and can really add to the existing overwhelm.



✨ KEEP CONSISTENT ✨

They say “**trust is built with consistency**” - it helps us build habits and create predictability & stability that help the whole family feel secure and connected.

What does keeping consistent look like?

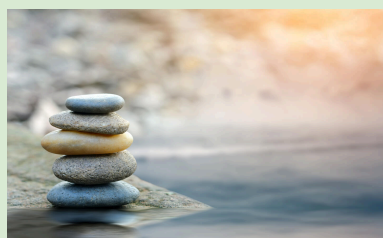
- Try and keep unpredictability to a minimum : have a family discussion about how to navigate the upcoming days, what's going to happen and when. You might even want to add notes to a calendar so there are no misunderstandings.
- Consistency can help the amygdala connect to previous safe experiences and reduce anxiety, so stick to the same patterns and sequence of events.
- Be true to your word : mean what you say and say what you mean. Keep factual, remove ambiguity and be honest in your communication.
- Consistency thrives in structure and routine which is the framework you need to keep it going - it soon becomes second nature.
- Establish a healthy support system : surround yourself with a safe circle that is supportive and understanding when times get tough.



✨ BRING BACK ROUTINES ✨

The festive season can see routines fly out the window and as soon as it's over we are just meant to gracefully slip back into them. **Sometimes a break in routine might just be what you need**, but the transition back is not an easy feat.. **How can you manage this?**

- Give yourself and your family grace : navigating this transition back can be very tricky, so acknowledge the fact that your emotions are valid responses to the challenges you might be facing.
 - Reflect on the festive season : what was the biggest change? Which routine reintroduction is the most important?
- Small steps: the cumulative impact of trying to do it all in one go can be very daunting and overwhelming. Reintroduce the elements of the routines in small steps.
- Be realistic : remember that capacity fluctuates - some days, some things will just not be feasible and that's ok.
- Incorporate self-care practices : while general routines are important, don't forget to include self-care ones as well. Allowing yourself and your family down time and opportunities to recover reduces the chance of further overwhelm or burnout.



There are so many wonderful resources to help you navigate the festivities, but the transitions for our families do not end there - that's why I have created this guide.

I hope you have found this short guide helpful. The aim was to provide you useful tips on how to get back to life **after** the festive season.

Each section is a completely customisable framework to meet your and your family's needs. Getting back into the swing of things can look different every year, as our needs, challenges and requirements change.

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Please also consider downloading this incredible labour of love coordinated by Jade Farrington and co-authored by 27 neurodivergent voices. Click here :

<https://subscribepage.io/tO5RvI>

The banner has a vibrant rainbow background. On the left, there are three overlapping book covers. The top-left cover is titled "Individual experiences". The middle cover is titled "This is our Christmas". The bottom-left cover is titled "Helping neurodivergent children transition through Christmas using the 'Be Wise and Thrive' approach". In the center, a yellow starburst contains the text "Written by neurodivergent people for everyone". To the right of the starburst is a book cover titled "A Community Guide to a Happy Neurodivergent Christmas" with the subtitle "DITCH THE EXPECTATIONS AND MEET YOUR NEEDS". At the bottom right, the text "Enter your email for your free copy" is written in a large, bold, black font.