

The background is a teal color with a pattern of overlapping circles in various shades of teal and dark teal. A solid red rectangle is located in the top right corner.

Surviving sensory overload at Christmas

Symptoms of Sensory Overload

what does it feel like?

- Extreme irritability or agitation
- Intense overwhelm
- Urge to cover ears, eyes or face
- Disorientation
- Wanting to run away from a situation or place
- Physical outbursts
- Inability to ignore sensory input (loud sounds, bright lights, strong smells, etc)
- Unable to focus



- Dizziness or overheating
- Headaches
- Confusion
- Racing thoughts
- Social withdrawal



- Wanting everything around you to “pause”
- Meltdowns or shutdowns

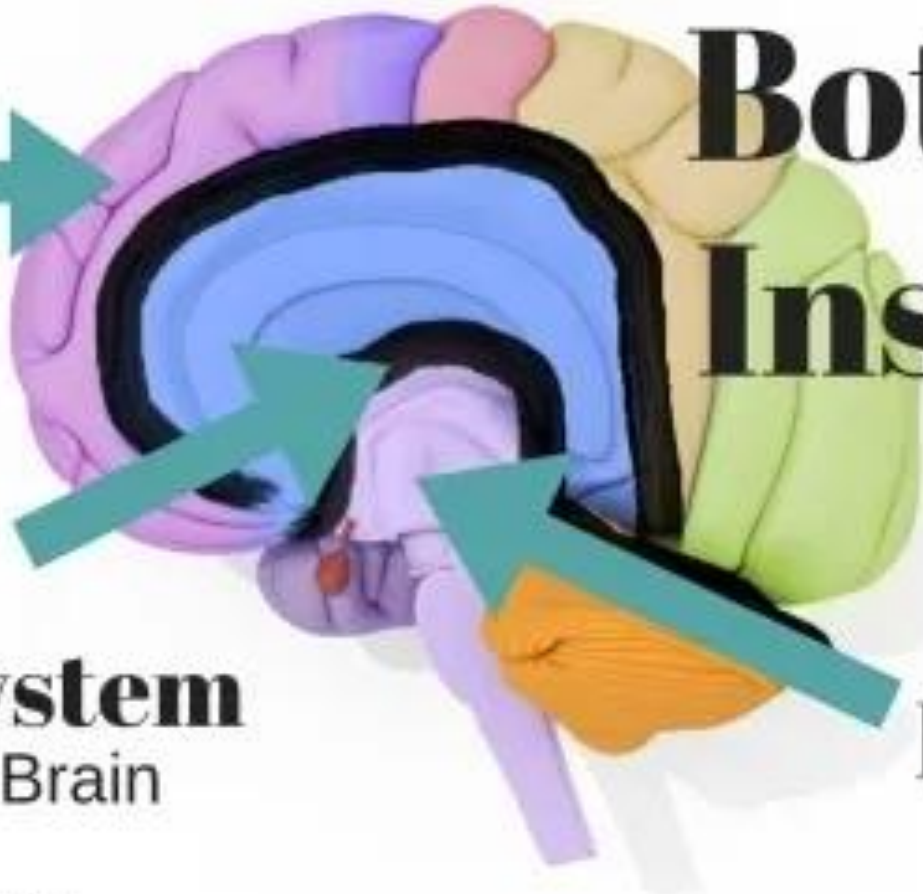




Bottom Up Inside Out

Neocortex

Language
Abstract Thought
"Thinking Brain"



Limbic System

Mammalian Brain

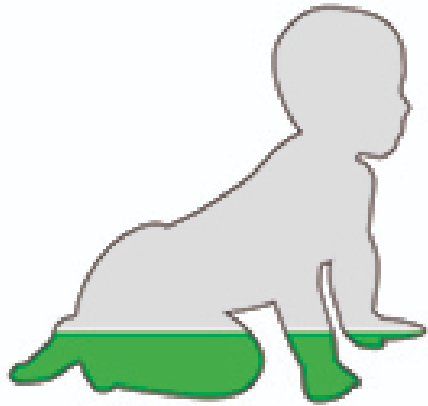
Emotions
Scans for danger

Brainstem

Reptilian Brain

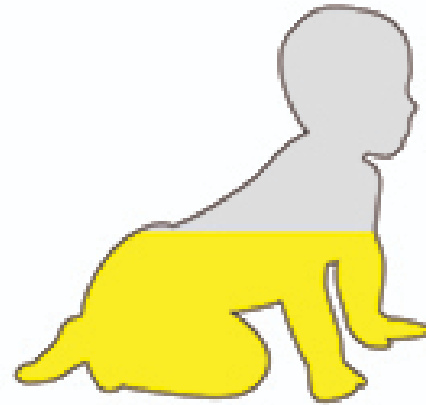
Automatic functions
Survival
Energy Regulation

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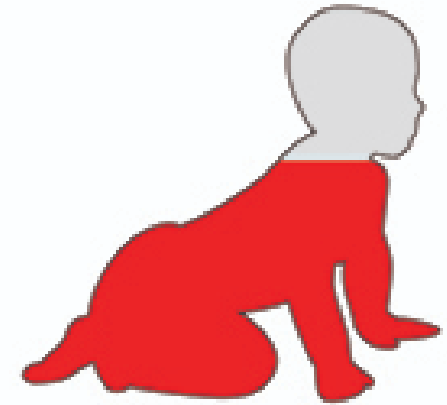
▶ **POSITIVE**

Brief increases in heart rate,
mild elevations in stress
hormone levels.



▶ **TOLERABLE**

Serious temporary stress
responses, buffered by
supportive relationships.



▶ **TOXIC**

Prolonged activation of stress
response systems

★ GET YOUR DAILY ★

D

DOPAMINE



THE
REWARD
CHEMICAL

- ★ Create something
- ★ Achieve a goal
- ★ Complete a task
- ★ Self-care activities

O

OXYTOCIN



THE
LOVE
HORMONE

- ★ Socialise
- ★ Hug a family member, friend or your pet
- ★ Help others

S

SEROTONIN



THE
MOOD
STABILISER

- ★ Get out in sunlight
- ★ Try mindfulness
- ★ Be with nature
- ★ Try meditation

E

ENDORPHINS



THE
PAIN
KILLER

- ★ Exercise
- ★ Listen to music
- ★ Watch a movie
- ★ Have a laugh with friends

The Road to Regulation



What Zone Are You In?

Blue Zone	Green Zone	Orange Zone	Red Zone
SAD HURT SICK TIRED	HAPPY FOCUSED CALM EXCITED	SURPRISED CONFUSED WORRIED SILLY	ANGRY RAGING TERRIFIED ANNOYED
What can I do?	What can I do?	What can I do?	What can I do?
REST	GO	SLOW DOWN	STOP
Take a break Ask for help Talk to someone Jump up and down 5 x I can also.....?	Think happy thoughts Finish my work Help others Share ideas I can also.....?	Take deep breaths Talk to someone Go for a short walk Count to ten I can also.....?	Take a time out Run a lap Squeeze a stress ball Drink water I can also.....?

Regulation Station

1. Flip over the 5 minute timer
2. Name your feeling in your head
3. Choose and complete a regulation strategy
4. Fill out the journal paper
5. Turn in the journal paper

My Mindful Advent Calendar 2025

Snow Globe Shake

Pretend you're inside a snow globe! Shake your arms and legs for 5 seconds, then stand still and let the "snow" settle as you breathe deeply.

Santa's Belly

Breathe in slowly and watch your belly fill with air! When it's big and round just like Santa's, breathe out and watch it fall. Finish by saying ho, ho, ho!

Snowman Count

Close your eyes and imagine snowmen popping up in the snow. Count them as they appear... 1 snowman... 2 snowman... 3 snowman... all the way to 10.

Bauble Breaths

Trace a big bauble in the air with your finger. As you draw the circle, take a slow breath in... and when you finish the circle, breathe out gently. Make 3 colourful baubles.

Christmas Star Jumps

Do 10 star jumps, take a deep breath in and out between each one. Imagine you are a glistening Christmas star jumping to the top of the tree!

Festive Feel

Find something Christmassy in the room - some tinsel or a decoration. Close your eyes and explore it with your hands, focusing on how it feels. Can you describe it?

Warm Thoughts

Wrap your arms around yourself for a big hug. Think about how safe and warm you feel. Take a deep breath in and out, then say something kind about yourself.

Santa's Sleigh

Imagine you are high in the sky in Santa's sleigh. What can you see? Stars? Clouds? Reindeer antlers? Describe it out loud or draw it!

Festive Daydream

Lie down and close your eyes for 2 minutes. Think of all your favourite things about this time of year and all the little things that make you happy.

Be a Penguin

Waddle around the room like a penguin! Try to change the pace every 5 seconds, waddling slowly then faster, then slowly again.

Snowball Squeeze

Pretend you're making a soft snowball. Squeeze your hands gently into fists, then slowly open them wide and let the snowball melt away. Repeat 5 times.

Santa's Footsteps

Sneak around the room trying to be as quiet as you can, like Santa delivering presents. Move softly and notice how your feet feel with each step.

Reindeer Reaches

Lift your arms like reindeer antlers. As you breathe in, stretch your antlers tall. As you breathe out, let your shoulders soften and relax. Repeat.

Elf Balance

Stand on one foot like a steady little elf. Imagine you're carrying a stack of presents and keeping them perfectly balanced as you breathe slowly.

Silent Night Pause

Close your eyes and be calm and still for 30 seconds. When you open your eyes, name three things you can see.

Nutcracker March

March on the spot like a Nutcracker soldier - slow, tall steps and straight arms. Keep marching for a few breaths, nice and steady.

Tree Lights Gratitude

Imagine a string of three tree lights. Say something you're thankful for to make each light glow your favourite colours.

Wish Upon a Star

Close your eyes and take a deep breath in, imagining a twinkling Christmas star. As you breathe out, make one gentle wish for yourself.

Angel Feathers

Let go of a worry by imagining yourself dropping a tiny feather. Watch it drift away and out of your mind. Repeat until you've let go of all your worries.

Silent Snowfall

Take a deep breath in and hold your hands out in front of you. As you breathe out, wiggle your fingers and slowly pull your arms down like falling snowflakes. Repeat 3 times.

Elf Ears

Close your eyes and listen carefully. Can you hear the furthest sound, the nearest sound, and the most unusual sound around you?

Reindeer Nose Scan

Take a slow breath and start at your nose. Notice how it feels, then gently scan down your body - nose to toes - relaxing each part as you go.

Hot Chocolate Hands

Rub your hands together until they feel warm, then cup them like you're holding hot chocolate. Take 3 deep breaths as you take in the chocolatey smell!

Christmas Kindness

Close your eyes and think of a time someone helped you. Now think of one kind thing you can do for someone else today.

Gingerbread Freeze

Stand like a gingerbread person. Tense your whole body for 5 seconds... then relax everything and feel the calm spread.



SENSORY CIRCUITS



1

START HERE

2

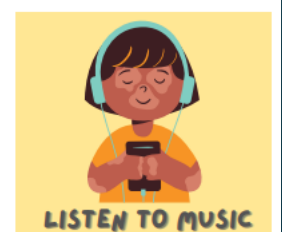
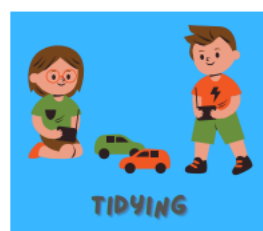
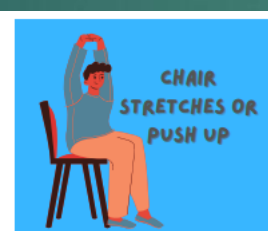
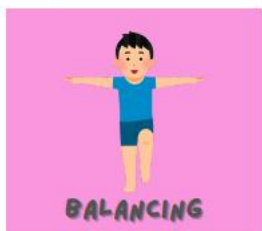
3

4

END HERE

5

6



Top 5 Take away tips

PLAN

Think ahead about triggers. Use visual schedules and create plans **WITH** your child. All autonomy where appropriate & possible

IDENTIFY TRIGGERS

Places, people, music, smells, tastes, words... Go through them with your child if possible

WORK TOGETHER

Caregivers (parents, teachers, family members etc) can plan and work together to reduce overwhelm where possible.



PICK YOUR BATTLES

Adjust and adapt what you can to make it suitable. But accept when you just need to abandon some plans in favour for contentment! This includes food, socialising and family traditions.

NO SURPRISES!

They're stressful!



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