

# Christmas and Your Child



**Children make the Christmas season extra special.** We adults enjoy watching children's reactions to the wonderful events of the holiday season. We anticipate their delight in a special gift. We savor the opportunity to pass on family traditions and make new memories. While we would love for this time to be perfect for everyone, the fact is that much of the time young children end up overwhelmed. As a result, those special events are often graced with the music of a fussy toddler or the wailing cries of a 2-year-old's tantrum.

To make the holiday season a simple, joyful, and meaningful time for your child, consider these suggestions:

- **DO NOT OVERBUY.** Buying for a small child is fun. As a result many parents and grandparents tend to buy too much. When your child is sitting in the middle of the floor surrounded by a large pile of gifts, she may have fun tearing off the paper, but the contents will quickly overwhelm her. Choose one special gift to give your child. Encourage grandparents to do the same. If your child still ends up with an abundance of gifts under the tree, try spreading them out over the next few weeks so your child can spend more time enjoying each gift.
- **KEEP A ROUTINE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.** Late nights and missed naps can wreak havoc on a young child's disposition. When keeping a routine is impossible, try to spend a few extra minutes doing a restful activity with your child such as wrapping up in a blanket and reading a Christmas book or singing the song "Away in a Manger" as you cuddle in the rocking chair.
- **EMPHASIZE THE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS.** Children quickly begin to relate Christmas with getting presents. Take time to emphasize that this is a time we celebrate Jesus' birth. Read the story of Baby Jesus to your child at bedtime. As you bake cookies, talk about what Mary and Joseph may have eaten. When you are shopping, talk about the wise men who took gifts to Jesus. Sing songs about Baby Jesus as you ride in the car. Long before the season is over, your child may be greeting visitors at the door with the good news of Jesus' birth!

