

FOURTH ISSUE | DECEMBER 2022

PURPOSEFUL PARENTING MAGAZINE



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Editors' Note



Dear Reader,

It is an absolute pleasure to welcome you to our December 2022 parenting and family magazine – “Purposeful Parenting Magazine (T)”. We have created this magazine with the intention of raising awareness, providing a space for the exchange of knowledge, dialogue, critique, and collaboration among family, child development practitioners, educators, special needs experts, scholars, as well as the community at large. In this publication we are exploring Christmas as celebrated in Serbia and in the Philippines. We have also included information on Screen Time and Toddler tantrums; the two topics that we believe will add value to all parents who are purposefully and intentionally raising their children.

It is our desire to share experiences, knowledge and good practices on early childhood, parenting, special needs and inclusive education with parents, professionals and community as a whole. By doing this we believe we will be in a better position to create a future of our children that is progressive - bringing in new heights of creativity and innovation.

With that being said, we are delighted that you are on this journey with us as readers and hope you will be enriched, enlightened and challenged.

**“A Merry Heart does good like medicine” Proverbs 17:22
Merry Christmas to you all!**

**ELIZABETH MLELI
HOLLIE MWAKITABU
Editors**

CHRISTMAS AROUND THE WORLD

Christmas is one of the most meaningful event for Christians and is celebrated around the world. It symbolizes the birth of Jesus Christ, the founder of the Christian faith. For Christians, it was the moment that God came to live among people as an ordinary person. We don't know the exact date of His birth because the bible does not specify the exact date. But it is thought to be around 5 or 6 BC (Before Christ). Most of the world celebrates Christmas Day on 25 December. But the Orthodox Church – which is found in Russia, eastern Europe and the Middle East – commemorates the birth of Jesus on the 7th of January. But this really doesn't matter because the aim of celebrating Christmas is to signify that one day many many years ago, Christ was born.

For many Christians, the season of Christmas begins with a four-week period called Advent. This starts on Advent Sunday, the fourth Sunday before Christmas Day. The word 'Advent' means 'coming' and looks forward to the second coming of Jesus. Historically during Advent Christians refrained from eating and drinking excessively as they look forward to marking the birth of Jesus. The period of abstaining ended with feasting on Christmas Day. The celebrations lasted 12 days, finishing with the exchanging of gifts at Epiphany on 6 January.



It is a bit sad to see that in the recent years, the actual biblical meaning of Christmas is not observed. Therefore, Advert has been commercialized and become materialistic. However, there are some Christians who are still observing the true meaning and trying to bring back the original spirit of Advert.

In this issue of our Parenting Magazine, we would like to explore how Christmas is celebrated in two of most amazing countries in the world; one in Europe – Serbia and the second one is from Asia Pacific – Philippines. Our choices are influenced by what children from school learned as part of our 'understanding of the world'. We have had a lot of fun learning, and children enjoyed making crafts, role playing, singing in different languages, and most importantly, children learned one of Christian's celebrations and festivals that has influenced so many people from different backgrounds all around the world. We hope that you and your family will enjoy to learn how these two countries celebrate their Christmas and you may wish to incorporate something interesting to your own Christmas festive.

CHRISTMAS IN THE PHILIPPINES



People in the Philippines like to celebrate Christmas for as long as possible! The playing of Christmas carols in shops can start in September! The formal Christmas celebrations start on 16th December when many people go to the first of nine pre-dawn or early morning masses. The last mass is on Christmas day. The Christmas celebrations continue to the First Sunday in January when Epiphany or the Feast of the Three Kings is celebrated.

In the Philippines the early masses held before Christmas are called the 'Misa de Gallo' or 'Simbang Gabi' in Filipino.

Most Filipinos are Christians with about 80% of people being Catholics. It's the only Asian country with so many Christians. Because of this, Christmas is the most important holiday in the Philippines. December is actually one of the 'cooler' months of the year in the Philippines. The Philippines only has two real seasons, wet (June to October) and dry (April and May). December is one of the months in between the wet and dry seasons.

Christmas customs in the Philippines are a mixture of western and native Filipino traditions. (Christianity became widely known in The Philippines in the 1500s when missionaries from countries like Portugal and Spain traveled to the area.) So people in the Philippines have Santa Claus (or 'Santa Klaus'), Christmas trees, Christmas cards and Christmas carols from western countries!

They also have their own Christmas traditions such as the 'parol' which is a bamboo pole or frame with a lighted star lantern on it. It's traditionally made from bamboo strips and colored Japanese paper or cellophane paper and represents the star that guided the Wise Men. It is the most popular Christmas decoration in the Philippines.

Christmas Eve is very important in the Philippines. Many people stay awake all night into Christmas day! During Christmas Eve evening, Christians go to church to hear the last 'simbang gabi' or the Christmas Eve mass. This is followed by a midnight feast, called Noche Buena.

The Noche Buena is a big, open house, celebration with family, friends and neighbors dropping in to wish everyone a Merry Christmas! Most households would have several dishes laid out and would normally include: lechon (roasted pig), ham, fruit salad, rice cakes (bibingka and puto bumbong are traditional Christmas foods) and other sweets, steamed rice, and many different types of drinks.



One very special person who helps people in the Philippines celebrate Christmas is Santa R-Kayma Klaws. He is a Filipino citizen, in his 70s and is of Irish descent. He has been spreading Christmas cheer among poor Filipino children by dressing up as Santa Claus during charity missions and corporate events in poor areas of the Philippines for over 50 years. He has a 'giant motor sleigh' (an air-conditioned bus!) that is used in many missions all over the Philippines. Santa R-Kayma Klaws owns the Philippines' only reindeer farm at Mt. Isarog in Barangay Sta. Cruz, Ocampo, Camarines Sur. The farm is open to the public for free. You can find out more about him and his work on his website: <http://pacificsantas.com>.

The Philippines has eight major languages, here's how to say Merry Christmas in some of them! In Tagalog, Happy/Merry Christmas is 'Maligayang Pasko'; in Ilocano it's 'Naragsak nga Paskua'; in Ilonggo it's 'Malipayon nga Pascua'; in Sugbuhanon or Cebuano it's 'Maayong Pasko'; in Bicolano they say 'Maugmang Pasko' in Pangalatok or Pangasinense they say 'Maabig ya pasko' or 'Magayagan inkianac'; and in Waray you say 'Maupay Nga Pasko'.

CHRISTMAS IN SERBIA



In Serbia, the main Church is the Orthodox Church and they still use the old 'Julian' Calendar, which means that Christmas Eve is on 6th January and Christmas Day is on the 7th January! Advent in the Orthodox Church starts on 28th November and last for six weeks. During Advent, some people fast and they don't eat food that comes from animals (meat, milk, eggs, etc.).

The countries of Serbia and Montenegro share many Christmas traditions.



Serbian Christmas Meal, via Wikimedia Commons

On Christmas Eve (called 'Badnji dan' during the day and 'Badnje veče' after sunset), families gather and many people fast and don't eat food that comes from animals. It is the last day of the Christmas fast. Christmas is a very religious holiday and most people go to the Christmas Services.

There are a lot of old Serbian traditions associated with the countryside, which have now lost their meaning because more people live in towns and cities. On the morning of Christmas Eve, the father of the family used to go to the forest to cut a young oak called the 'Badnjak' (Christmas Eve tree) but today people just buy one. The Badnjak is then burnt like a Yule Log.

There are sometimes large bonfires outside churches where oak branches and Badnjak are burnt.

A Badnjak Bonfire outside the Church of St Sava in Belgrade, via Wikimedia Commons



Reference: <https://www.whychristmas.com/>

On Christmas Day the dawn is greeted with church bells ringing and sometimes people firing guns into the air! The first person to enter a house on Christmas Day is called a položajnik and it's thought to bring luck to the house and family. The položajnik is often pre-arranged. But if the family don't have a good year, they don't ask the same person back!

Early on Christmas morning, girls traditionally collected water to bring to their family. This was called 'strong water' and was meant to have special powers. People would drink some strong water and wash their faces in it before having breakfast!

At Christmas a special kind of bread is eaten. It's called 'cesnica' and is made in a round shape. Sometimes it's made using some of the 'strong water'. Each member of the family gets a piece (and the house does too). There is a coin hidden in it and whoever gets the coin will be particularly fortunate in the next year!

Other popular Christmas dishes include pecenica (roast pork), sarma (cabbage stuffed with rice and ground meat) and lots of cakes!

Under the dinner table there should be some straw as a symbol of the stable/cave where Jesus was born. When the straw is spread out, some people make the noise of a chicken! Clucking like a chicken symbolises that Jesus wanted people to follow him like one big family (like chickens gather together!). It's also common for a handful of walnuts to be spread on the straw.

In Serbian Happy/Merry Christmas is Hristos se rodi (Христос се роди) - Christ is born Vaistinu se rodi (Ваистину се роди) - truly born (reply). [Happy/Merry Christmas in lots more languages.](#)

People in Serbia also celebrate [St. Nicholas' Day](#), but on the 19th December. During the time when Serbia was under communist control (after World War II until about 20 years ago), the communist government didn't like St. Nicholas or Santa Claus, so they had their own version called Grandfather Frost (Деда Мраз / Deda Mraz) or Christmas Brother (Божић Бата / Božić Bata), who came on New Year's Eve.

Traditional Serbian customs have also mixed with western customs. For example people also have [Christmas Trees](#) but they are decorated on New Year's Eve, not at Christmas!

SWITCH OFF THE SCREEN!

Over the last few years, there have been such advancements in technology that it now seems impossible to avoid – smart phones, laptops and televisions all play a massive part in our day to day lives. However, with this comes challenges with deciding what is appropriate for our little ones, particularly during the crucial early years period.

When discussing screen-time with parents, it is often seen as such a taboo topic that can bring with it feelings of immense guilt for parents. The message of “all screen time is bad” is such a vague one that it simply isn’t as effective as it could be. We all need to be aware of the reasons why we should limit screen time and the effects it can have on our children.

What to look for in quality screen time:

- slow paced
- muted colours
- no more than 1-2 sounds at once
- natural backgrounds
- realistic movements
- no mesmerising animation
- quality storylines
- natural conversation
- rich vocabulary
- modelling of kindness
- no villains or conflicts
- diverse characters



We need to look at the quality of the screen-time we are letting out children access. We can sometimes think that shows that seemingly teach children subjects such as the alphabet or numbers must be good for them.

However, these shows are often filled with saturated colours, mesmerizing animations, flashing letters and multiple sounds appearing at the same time. Although these appear to be ‘child friendly’, these are actually all tactics used to overstimulate the brain and ultimately hold the child’s attention for an unnaturally long time. Basically, all screen-time has a drug-like affect on the brain. It releases dopamine which activates a pleasure/reward cycle and causes the brain to become reliant on increasingly more stimuli.

Producers of shows such as Cocomelon purposefully use overstimulation tactics so that parents will have no choice to placate their screaming children by giving in to their TV show addiction. They will then market it to you as educational to make you feel less guilty about allowing your little one to continue watching. We need to shift this focus from screens onto practical activities like imaginative play to encourage our children to become independent learners.

Symptoms of screen-time addiction:

- frequent tantrums
- difficulty sleeping
- whiney/clingy behaviour
- hyperactivity
- inability to play independently
- behavioural issues
- trouble socialising
- lack of creativity
- inability to regulate moods
- lack of impulse control
- trouble connecting with others

Unfortunately, most of these symptoms are now causing children to be misdiagnosed with ADHD and autism.

To summarise, if your child zones out while watching a show followed by a period of either tantrums or hysteria, then they are showing signs of being overstimulated. If you cannot avoid screens, you want to be looking for signs they are engaging such as laughing, discussions and questions about what is happening. Reduction in screen time can help improve sleep quality, reduce behavioural issues, increase quality of play, increase social skills and decrease a dependence on an item.



TODDLER TANTRUMS AND HOW TO COPE WITH THEM

“A tantrum, a temper tantrum or a hissy fit is an emotional outburst, usually associated with children or those in emotional distress, that is typically characterized by stubbornness, crying, screaming, defiance, angry ranting, a resistance to attempts at pacification and, in some cases, even hitting. Physical control may be lost; the person may be unable to remain still; and even if the "goal" of the person is met, he or she may not be calmed. A tantrum may be expressed in a tirade: a protracted, angry, or violent speech.” <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tantrum>

Tantrums can range from whining and crying to screaming, kicking, hitting, and breath holding and they are equally common in boys and girls and usually happen between the ages of 1 to 3. Some kids may have tantrums often, and others have them rarely. Tantrums are a normal part of child development and are the way young children show if they are upset or frustrated or want independence and control over their environment.

When children realise that they cannot always do everything themselves or do everything that they want, they may have a tantrum.

Tantrums may happen when kids are tired, hungry and uncomfortable or because they cannot get something or do what they want. As parents and caregivers we must remember that learning to deal with frustration is a skill that children gain over time and that toddlers need to develop their language skills and learn how to express themselves. Most tantrums are due to frustrations and are a symptom that a child is struggling with emotions that they are unable to control and can also be related to changes in the home or immediate world of a toddler.

6 tips on how to handle a tantrum:

1. When a child is having a tantrum, they are normally unable to listen to reason and therefore the most important rule is to not lose your temper with them or storm out of the room. Instead, staying with your child and just sitting down whilst they have their tantrum is a good idea. There are mixed reports on whether physically comforting your child is another option as it could be seen as a reward to negative behaviour but you will need to find the best solution for you and your child. By staying calm, you will help your child to calm down too but you will need to speak with a calm but objective and authoritative voice. Teaching by example is your most powerful tool and therefore try to speak calmly, clearly, and firmly — not with anger, blame, harsh criticisms or threats.

2. Whatever you do, do not try to negotiate with your child if they are having a tantrum and do not give in to any demands. If you give in, you are teaching your child that by throwing a tantrum, they will get what they want. If you are in a public place, do not worry about what others think and be prepared to leave with your child until they have calmed down.

3. Depending on your child you can occasionally use a time out (from the age of 18 months) to help them manage their feelings in a quiet (or boring) space. This can also help them learn to self soothe but you will need to explain what you are doing and let them know it is not a punishment. The length of time out in minutes should be equal to the age of the child in years. If they refuse to stay in time out, simply place them back in the spot firmly but calmly and go about your business. Beyond making sure they are safe, do not interact or give them attention during the time out.

4. When your child's tantrum has subsided, hold them close and talk to them about what happened (in simple terms) and acknowledge your child's frustrations. Let them see that when they express themselves in words, they will get better results.

5. Once the tantrum has subsided and you have spoken with them, give them a hug and tell them that you love them. You are rewarding the good behaviour of calming down but not succumbing to their tantrum and demands.

6. You will get to know what often sparks your child's tantrums so try and intervene before the tantrum starts or distract (make a silly face, point at something in the room etc) your child from a specific situation. If your child normally throws a tantrum when they are hungry carry a snack with you. It is also important to give a child some warning to any transitions (their minds are immersed in the task at hand) from one activity to another so that they can mentally adjust and not just react negatively.

Every toddler develops at different stages but as your child becomes more independent you can also give them choices such as "Would you like some more pasta", rather than "Eat your pasta" and monitor how often you say "no" to your child.

Although daily tantrums are a perfectly normal part of the mid-toddler years, it's a good idea to keep an eye out for possible problems. Any upheaval or change in the home, busy periods, parental tensions or new babies can also provoke tantrums.

Although it is often easier said than done, try to not let your child even spark off into a tantrum as this also releases stress hormones which will swamp their system and they will then not have enough serotonin to balance themselves out. As mentioned above, if you think a tantrum may be about to start, give them a good solid hug and try to divert their attention.

Involve your child in daily activities that will boost their serotonin levels, such as vigorous play (jumping and running) and listening to music. That way, if they do get worked up, they will have a reserve of serotonin to help them cope with life's travails.

Resources:

<http://www.babycenter.com>

<http://www.childmind.org>

<http://kidshealth.org>

<http://www.madeformums.com/toddler-and-preschool/>





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