



 **Hello December!**

Welcome to the most magical (and sometimes busiest!) month of Christmas! Here at the nursery, we are embracing the spirit of peace and togetherness. We know the Christmas season can bring stress, so this month, we encourage all our families to pause, take a deep breath, and prioritise the quiet, meaningful moments of connection with your children. Remember, the greatest gift you can give is your focused presence.



## **Monthly Theme: Peace, Presence, and Connection**

This December, our theme is designed to serve as a gentle reminder to slow down and protect your family time from the frenzy of the Christmas period. The true spirit of the season lies not in the perfected calendar or the stack of wrapped gifts, but in the quality of the connection you share with your child. We encourage all families to intentionally seek moments of quietude and deep presence.

**Embracing Peace:** Christmas can be overwhelming for children (and adults!). Peace is often found in the absence of noise and rush. We challenge you to identify one specific element of your usual holiday schedule that you can simplify or eliminate entirely this year. Perhaps it means saying 'no' to an extra obligation or leaving the decorations slightly less than perfect. This small act of simplifying will create valuable space for calm and restoration within your home environment.

**Prioritising Presence:** Presence is the most precious gift you can give your child. This month, look for opportunities to be fully with your child. This doesn't require elaborate planning, but rather a deliberate choice to put aside digital distractions and domestic tasks. Whether you are reading a book, sharing a simple meal, or just sitting together, let them know through your undivided attention that they are the most important person in your world at that moment.

**Strengthening Connection:** Use the unique atmosphere of the season to strengthen your family bonds. This can be achieved through shared rituals—baking a simple recipe together, taking a quiet walk to admire the lights, or sharing a favourite story by the fire. These simple, low-stakes activities build a foundation of secure attachment and create the cherished memories that define childhood, far outlasting any toy. Let connection be the central joy of your Christmas this year.





## Practitioner Spotlight:

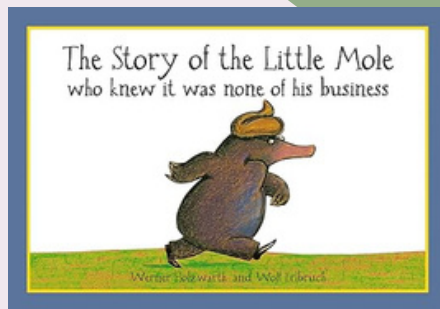
This month, we would like to highlight Caitlin, our nursery manager. She divides her time between both nursery sites and has been a key figure at Grass Roots since its inception. Caitlin holds a Level 7 qualification and is committed to continuous professional development.

Caitlin is kind, warm, and caring, ensuring that the wellbeing of children, staff, and families remains a top priority in our nursery's ethos. Additionally, she leads our professional relationship with the Stronger Practice Hub, where she delivers webinars and writes blogs to support practitioner development.



## Event Calendar:

- Family SEND support session @ Grass Roots Family Centre Thursday 18th December at 10am.
- We break up for Christmas on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> December (Term time only)/ Wednesday 24th December (full year care) and return to nursery on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> January.



## Community News:

- Check out Grass Roots Family CIC facebook page for community events  
<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100086769567112>
- 50 things to do before you are 5 has events on their website  
<https://calderdale.50thingstodo.org/app/os#!/welcome>
- Support Noa's Place, a vision of one of our nursery's parents - [www.noasplace.org.uk](http://www.noasplace.org.uk)



## Book Review:

The Story of the Little Mole Who Knew It Was None of His Business  
by Werner Holzwarth and Wolf Erlbruch

This classic, funny story is about a little mole on a quest to find the culprit who left a "deposit" on his head.

It's a hilarious and slightly absurd tale that is completely unrelated to Christmas! By choosing a book outside of the seasonal rush, we encourage a moment of pure, simple, and silly joy that has nothing to do with shopping lists or seasonal stress. It's a great reminder to find connection and laughter in the everyday.





## Curriculum Focus: Deep Listening

Our curriculum focus this month is on Deep Listening as a foundation for connection.

- What it is: Deep listening means putting down your mobile/task and giving your child your undivided attention—making eye contact and truly hearing what they are communicating, both verbally and through body language.
- At the Nursery: We are practising “turn-taking” in conversations, using instruments to practise waiting and listening to a rhythm, and playing “I hear something...” games.
- At Home Tip: Try setting a 10-minute “Deep Listen Time” each day where you do nothing but focus on your child and whatever they want to talk about or show you. This small act can significantly strengthen your connection.

## ? Q&A: “How can I manage my child's over-excitement and big feelings during the Christmas period?”

The excitement of Christmas can trigger challenging behaviour. Here is our advice:

The Answer: The key is to pre-empt overstimulation and focus on connection before correction.

1. Simplify and Schedule Peace: Build “buffer time” into your schedule, especially before and after big events. Don’t overcommit. Say ‘no’ to one extra Christmas gathering. Schedule a quiet afternoon for reading or cuddling.
2. Acknowledge the Feeling: Instead of saying, “Calm down,” try, “Wow, you are so excited right now! Your body is moving fast!” This acknowledges their feeling and helps them connect their physical state to the emotion.
3. Prioritise Sleep and Routine: The best tool for managing big feelings is a consistent, early bedtime. A well-rested child is a more peaceful child.







## Recipe Corner: No-Bake Date & Oat Christmas Energy Balls

This simple, whole-food recipe requires no baking, making it perfect for safe, focused connection with small children in the kitchen.

### Ingredients:

Rolled Oats 100g  
Dates (pitted) 100g  
Smooth Peanut Butter 2 tbsp  
Water or Milk 1-2 tbsp  
Mixed Spice or Cinnamon 1/2 tsp  
Desiccated Coconut For coating

### Instructions (Child-Friendly Steps):

1. Measure and Mix: Combine the oats, dates, peanut butter (or alternative), spice, and liquid in a food processor or a bowl. Mix until a thick, sticky mixture forms.
2. Roll: Let your child roll small amounts of the mixture into balls. This is a great sensory activity.
3. Decorate: Roll the finished balls in desiccated coconut for a snowy finish.
4. Chill: Place in the fridge for at least 30 minutes to set before enjoying together.

Connection Activity: Focus on the different textures and the calming, repetitive action of rolling. This shared, simple task creates focused connection without the festive chaos.



## Tips and Tricks: The Gift of Presence

This month's tip is simple: Less is More. During the Christmas rush, the greatest gift you can give is your undivided presence.

Instead of focusing on buying one more toy, try gifting an experience or a presence-filled activity. These activities build connection without adding clutter or stress.

- The Power-Down Hour: Designate a specific hour, a few times a week, as completely device-free for the whole family (including you!). Use the time for shared activities like reading, baking, or playing a simple board game. This protects precious family time.
- The One-on-One Voucher: Create simple "coupons" for special, one-on-one time with each parent (e.g., "A Hot Chocolate Date with Mum," "Ten Minutes of Cuddles and Story Time with Dad"). This makes focused attention a tangible, meaningful gift.
- The Shared Ritual Walk: Take a quiet walk to look at the stars or the Christmas lights. Hold hands and encourage silent observation and shared awe. The focus is on physical closeness and enjoying the moment together, free from distraction.

By simplifying your schedule and giving your time, you gift your child a feeling of security and strong connection.





## Risky Play: The Joys of the Dark

Risky play doesn't mean dangerous play; it means providing opportunities for children to learn to assess, manage, and overcome challenges in a safe and supportive environment. This type of play is crucial for developing confidence, resilience, and problem-solving skills. When children successfully navigate a challenge, they experience a huge boost in self-esteem.

**The Focus:** Playing in the dark or semi-darkness (under close supervision). This activity encourages children to embrace uncertainty and rely on their other senses, which is a powerful confidence builder.

- **Activity Idea:** Build a large, cosy blanket fort inside. Once secured, turn off the lights inside. Use a small torch (not a bright lamp) to read a book, tell a whispering story, or search for small hidden treasures.
- **The Risk/Reward:** Children challenge their natural fear of the dark and gain confidence in their senses of touch and hearing. Importantly, it is a powerful connecting activity because they feel safe and secure with you as their guide in an unknown, slightly mysterious environment. This shared, slightly thrilling experience strengthens the bond of trust between parent and child, reinforcing that their grown-up is a reliable source of comfort and security.



## Healthy Choices: Balance is the Key to Peace

We know that the Christmas season inherently involves more social gatherings and, inevitably, a higher intake of sugary or rich foods. Rather than advocating for a total ban on festive treats, our focus this month is on teaching balance and promoting a relaxed, peaceful approach to food. Restrictive eating can add unnecessary stress to both parents and children.

To support healthy choices without creating conflict, focus on these strategies:

1. **Avoid Labeling Foods:** We encourage you to move away from labeling foods as "good" or "bad." Instead, talk to your children about what different foods do for our bodies. Explain that some foods, like fruit, vegetables, and whole grains, give our bodies slow-release energy that helps us run and play for a long time. Others, like sweets, give us a fast-burst energy that is fun, but doesn't last long. This teaches them about nutrition without guilt.
2. **The Golden Rule: Pre-emptive Snacking:** The best strategy for managing sugar intake at parties or gatherings is prevention. Always offer a healthy, filling snack before you leave the house. A child who is not hungry is far less likely to be overwhelmed and immediately reach for only the sugary treats on offer. Good pre-party snacks include cheese and crackers, hummus and carrots, or a piece of fruit.





## Online Safety: Setting Device-Free Connection Zones



This month, our focus is on ensuring technology doesn't steal your precious family connection during the Christmas period. True online safety starts with mindful screen use at home.

The Main Tip: Create "No Phone Zones."

The most vital step is setting clear boundaries for devices—and this rule applies to everyone, especially the adults! Designate specific times and spaces in your home as completely device-free.

- The Dinner Table: This should always be a sacred, phone-free zone for peaceful family conversation.
- The First 30 Minutes Home: Put your mobile away for the first half-hour after nursery/work. Use this time for genuine, distraction-free reconnection.
- Bedtime Story: Leave your phone outside the bedroom door during cuddles and stories.

Be the Example: By consistently putting your phone away during these crucial moments, you demonstrate to your child that they are your priority. You model healthy technology use and protect the core connection that defines a peaceful home.

## Sustainability: Reduce, Reuse, Repair

This Christmas, let's explore how a commitment to the environment can lead to a more peaceful and connected family life. Sustainability encourages us to slow down, be thoughtful about our consumption, and appreciate the creative possibilities of things we already own.

1. Recycle (Mindful Disposal): Teach your child the importance of separating waste correctly. This can be a simple, shared task. Use the period after Christmas to mindfully recycle all paper, card, and packaging from gifts. Making recycling a visible, simple family chore teaches responsibility and respect for resources.

2. Repurpose (Creative Connection): Instead of buying new wrapping paper or decorations, repurpose materials you already have.

- Activity Idea: Use old newspapers, brown paper bags, or children's drawings to wrap gifts. Decorate them with natural elements like pine sprigs or dried oranges. This creative task is a wonderful opportunity for focused, peaceful connection with your child.

3. Reuse (Gifting Experiences): Focus the spirit of giving on experiences rather than disposable goods. Reuse items by making them part of a new family tradition, like revisiting cherished Christmas books or playing with classic toys. Consider buying pre-loved items for gifts, which teaches children that value comes from quality and connection, not just being brand new.

By embracing the three R's this December, you model mindful living and reduce the material clutter that can often overwhelm the peace of the season.

