

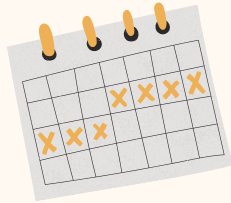
5 Christmas Rituals

Mindfully add more meaning to your existing Christmas celebrations

by Susanne North

1. A meaningful countdown

As an alternative form of an Advent Calendar, families can set up a nature or seasonal table, a special space where children can place all their treasures. The table could be set up with a special Christmas cloth and twenty-four stones that make a path for Mary and Joseph walking the journey to Bethlehem. Children can make the stable out of resources from nature and decorate this space with treasures from nature as they go along. It is an exciting countdown, an immersion in a process that lends itself to many meaningful conversations and engagements with the theme of Christmas.



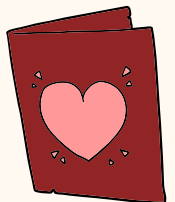
2. Saint Nikolaus

6 December. There are some beautiful stories and traditions about Saint Nikolaus who is also the Saint for children and the poor. Discussing the traditions of this Saint who is also the predecessor of Santa helps children to get to know and learn more about this magic and mystic figure who is the giver to children. That way the whole Santa thing becomes less tokenistic and adds more meaning to it.



3. Fostering altruism and kindness

In our house we have the rule to make at least one gift. It could entail writing a poem, drawing a picture, writing a card of appreciation, a crafted gift, a photo or keepsake album. Simply, a present from the heart. Children love being involved in making something for others. It teaches them the importance of altruism, love and kindness, qualities which we want to nurture in our children, and which are the key messages of the Christmas story.



4. Nativity Set

Children love nativity sets. Again, they bring meaning and the purpose of the Christmas celebration into your homes, redirecting the focus from consumerism to the actual meaning of this feast day. Everyone can relate to the birth of a baby and the immense joy and hope it brings. The sets can be bought or made. Some craft shops sell little kits that can be hand painted and assembled. Children can use the figurines for role playing, storytelling and decoration under the Christmas tree.



5. Christmas Eve

In many cultures, Christmas is celebrated on Christmas Eve. Gathering together in the dark and lighting lots of candles brings magic into the room. Children love candles. Reading the Christmas story together, listening to some traditional Christmas hymns, singing, sharing some poetry, reading the "Night before Christmas", praying and hanging out the stockings helps everyone to slow down and join mindfully in anticipation of Christmas day. Tip: Kids love baking gingerbread houses!

