

## Concept development- 'Oh Christmas Tree'

<p><b>P</b>repare</p>	<p>When we stop and think about it, dragging a plastic replica tree out from the loft, dressing it in lights and balls, then standing it up in the middle of the living room, is quite an unusual tradition. Although artificial Xmas trees are designed to look like their living counterparts, for a child without vision they have very little in common. Careful structuring of the child's experiences is important for developing meaningful conceptual understanding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Older children might be interested in researching the tradition of Christmas trees. Where do they come from? Why do we use certain types of tree?</li> <li>• Share stories about children preparing for Christmas (I know one child who loved the episode where Peppa Pig puts up her Christmas decorations), let the child handle decorations and pines.</li> <li>• Share the excitement of choosing decorations and a tree together. What makes a nice tree?</li> <li>• What does your child know about Christmas trees- what concepts does your child mention and associate? Can you identify any misconceptions which you need to target?</li> <li>• What does your child want to find out? (this is the most important bit- but they may need a little guiding)</li> <li>• Sing songs such as 'Oh Christmas Tree' note concepts for development</li> </ul>	
<p><b>E</b>xperience</p>	<p><b>Touch</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does a Christmas tree feel like other trees in winter? Why? How does it feel?</li> <li>• What are 'pines' do they fall off in winter like leaves?</li> <li>• What do different decorations feel like?</li> <li>• Can you collect leaves and pine cones in the park?</li> <li>• Some people put fake snow on their Christmas tree- why? What is snow? What does it feel like?</li> <li>• How big is it? How wide is it? What does the trunk feel like? Is it the same all around or are some parts wider?</li> <li>• Children will need the experience of feeling trees in the ground. How do we get them out?</li> </ul>

	<b>Smell</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Last week I came across 'Scenticles' these are small sticks which you attach to your tree to add Christmas scents. Obviously your child would not be able to handle these</li> <li>• Create dried fruit decorations such as dried oranges</li> <li>• You could also make ginger bread men to hang from the tree (link to taste)</li> <li>• You could make Christmas smells using spices in muslin bags. This is probably a nicer idea than using Scenticles</li> </ul>
	<b>Sounds</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Singing Christmas tree carols</li> <li>• Some people hang bells from the tree (they may come across sleigh bells- what is a sleigh?)</li> </ul>
	<b>Taste</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It may not be advisable to taste a Christmas tree; however this is a good excuse to sample Christmas treats. Why do we use cloves, cardamom, cinnamon and ginger more at Christmas? What are candy canes? Why do people put chocolate on their trees?</li> </ul>
	<b>Sight</b>	<p>Christmas is an excellent time for visual stimulation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some children with CVI may be attracted to the movement properties of tinsel and shiny baubles. Some parents suggest that their children are visually attracted to the movement properties of trees blowing in the wind</li> <li>• For children who experience difficulty with visual complexity, aim to use single solid colours and gentle lights. <b>Christmas can be a sensory overload for some children.</b> If this is the case, do one thing at a time and alternate the use of the senses. The Little Bear sees website has some excellent ideas to make Christmas CVI friendly <a href="http://littlebearsees.org/2011/12/11/a-cvi-christmas/">http://littlebearsees.org/2011/12/11/a-cvi-christmas/</a></li> <li>• If you have made dried fruit decorations, these look great on a light box- if you don't have a light box you can download the light box app on a tablet</li> <li>• Reinforce the language of colour</li> <li>•</li> </ul>

## Reinforce

- This is the easy bit as you will probably have a six foot tree in your living room. Revisit the key concepts
- **Although the PEER concept has been presented in a table for convenience- this should be seen as a cycle. Now we know some things about a Christmas tree- what else would we like to find out? It is possible to go from one topic to the next- aim to keep the cycle in motion**

Finally, it goes without saying that children should not handle objects without full adult supervision at all times.