

COPING WITH CHRISTMAS

Tips from a Counsellor to help manage family tension, difficult feelings and stress over the christmas period


Managing Family Tensions

- **Set Boundaries:** Decide what you're comfortable with and communicate it kindly but firmly.
- **Take Breaks:** Step outside for fresh air or find a quiet spot if tensions rise.
- **Focus on Common Ground:** Shift conversations to shared interests to ease conflicts.
- **Don't Take the Bait:** If a family member tries to provoke you, stay calm and disengage politely.


Handling Difficult Feelings

- **Acknowledge Your Emotions:** It's ok to feel sad, lonely, or anxious at Christmas.
- **Create New Traditions:** If the old ones feel painful, try something fresh that brings you comfort.
- **Reach Out:** Talk to a trusted friend, family member, or counsellor about how you're feeling.
- **Practice Grounding:** helps bring your focus back to the present moment and help you feel calm

Reducing Christmas Stress

- **Make a Plan:** Write a realistic to-do list and prioritise tasks to avoid last-minute chaos.
 - **Simplify Gifting:** Consider giving experiences, homemade items, or even agreeing to no gifts this year.
 - **Say No:** It's okay to decline events or tasks that feel overwhelming.
 - **Take Care of Yourself:** Schedule time for rest, hobbies, or activities that recharge you.
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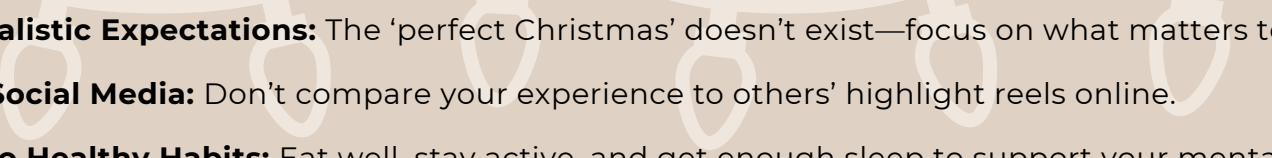
Coping with Financial Pressure

- **Set a Budget:** Decide how much you can afford to spend and stick to it.
 - **Get Creative:** Meaningful doesn't have to mean expensive—handwritten cards or homemade treats can be just as special.
 - **Focus on Gratitude:** Remember, the festive season is about togetherness, not material things. Shift your focus from what's lacking to what's present and meaningful in your life.
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Dealing with Loneliness

- **Reach Out:** Join local groups, volunteer, or attend community events to connect with others.
- **Make Virtual Plans:** If you're apart from loved ones, schedule video calls or online activities.
- **Practise Self-Kindness:** Spend the day doing things you enjoy—read, watch a favourite film, or treat yourself.

Tips for Mental Well-being

- **Set Realistic Expectations:** The 'perfect Christmas' doesn't exist—focus on what matters to you.
 - **Limit Social Media:** Don't compare your experience to others' highlight reels online.
 - **Stick to Healthy Habits:** Eat well, stay active, and get enough sleep to support your mental health.
 - **Practice being mindful :** Take a few minutes to breathe deeply and focus on the present moment.
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Finding Support

If you find Christmas challenging, talking to a counsellor can help. You don't have to go through it alone.

www.lynseyberwickcounselling.com

If you are looking for immediate mental health support call 116 123 to talk to [Samaritans](http://Samaritans.org), or email: jo@samaritans.org for a reply within 24 hours

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Festive Boundaries Made Easy: Ready-to-Use Responses

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Setting Boundaries Around Time

"I'd love to catch up, but I only have a little time to spare right now. Let's make the most of it!"
(Acknowledges the relationship while being clear about time limits.)

"This is a busy time for me, so I'll need to leave by [specific time]. I wanted to let you know in advance." *(Sets expectations while maintaining kindness.)*

Asking for Support When Needed

This season can feel overwhelming for me—would you mind helping with [specific task or request]?" *(Communicates need clearly and invites collaboration.)*

- "I'm feeling a bit off today. Could we keep things simple and just spend some quiet time together?" *(Expresses vulnerability while fostering connection.)*

Responding to Unwanted Advice

"I know you mean well, but I need to handle this in my own way." *(Acknowledges good intentions while asserting independence.)*

"I've got this covered, but I appreciate your concern. Let's enjoy the our Christmas instead!"
(Redirects attention to the festive spirit while maintaining boundaries.)

Needing Space

"I'm feeling a bit overwhelmed. I just need some quiet time to recharge, and I'll be back soon." *(Gives a clear reason for stepping away without guilt.)*

"It's getting a bit much for me, so I'm going to take a quick break. I'll join back in soon." *(Sets boundaries while affirming intention to return.)*

Food or Drink

"It looks lovely, but I'm not hungry right now—thank you!" *(Gracious and polite while declining.)*

"No, thank you. I'm good for now, but it all looks amazing!" *(Expresses appreciation while holding boundaries.)*

"Thanks, but I'm taking a break from drinking right now. I'll stick with [water/soft drink]." *(Sets a clear preference without overexplaining.)*

"I've had plenty already, but thanks for offering!" *(Politely turns down additional servings.)*

Handling Emotional Conversations

"I appreciate you sharing that, but I'd rather keep the conversation light right now. Let's talk about something else." *(Redirects without dismissing the other person's feelings.)*

"That's a tough topic for me, especially at Christmas. Can we revisit it another time?" *(Sets boundaries on timing without shutting the person out completely.)*

Handling Criticism

"I hear what you're saying, but this is what works best for me right now." *(Acknowledges the comment without accepting blame or guilt.)*

"That's an interesting perspective. I've thought about it, and I feel good about the decision I've made." *(Validates yourself while staying calm and confident.)*

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