

Coping over the festive period



Mental health:

Christmas has long been heralded as 'the most wonderful time of the year', but for some that's simply not the case. There are many stressors associated with this holiday period, and some are not quite as obvious as others.



Stress

The festive period can be a stressful time with additional financial pressures, crowds and expectations of the season. The Royal Society of Public Health identified the **ten best and worst aspects of Christmas for mental wellbeing** and notes that the **5 ways to mental wellbeing** – connect, be active, take notice, keep learning and give, are all reflected within the top ten best aspects of their research.

- Spend time with family and friends but consider spreading out your diary or planning how your time will be shared allowing time for yourself also
- Take some exercise; go for a walk or make time for a class
- Organise, prioritise and set reasonable goals and budget
- Share the load, allow others to take some of the responsibility
- Avoid over indulgence in food or alcohol as a means of trying to manage emotions
- Have fun! It's your Christmas too. If things don't quite go to plan try not to worry, instead can these be fun memories to remember in years to come?

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/five-ways-to-mental-wellbeing>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/improve-mental-wellbeing/>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/stress/#.XZMEWJV8Dcs>

The Samaritans provide a 24 hour/365 day support line for anyone experiencing a difficult time Freephone 116 123 or email (usually 24 hour response time) jo@samaritans.org Further information can be found on the website <https://www.samaritans.org/>

Alcohol and drugs

There is often a story of a friend, relative or colleague who has done something they shouldn't have after a drink too many. Whilst the festive period is seen as a time for fun and celebration, it's also a time of year when any problem drinking can be highlighted. There are a number of organisations providing information and support in relation to addiction and substance misuse including:

www.drinkaware.co.uk website includes alcohol unit calculator, drink tracker and alcohol self-assessment tools.

Drinkline phone 0300 123 1110 (Freephone 9.00am-8pm mon-fri, 11am-4pm Sat & Sun) confidential national helpline for anyone worried about their own or someone else's drinking.

Alcoholics anonymous run self-help groups nationally for anyone wanting to change their drinking behaviours: <https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/> Freephone helpline 0800 9177 650 or email help@aamail.org

Narcotics anonymous run self help groups nationally for anyone wanting to change drug use behaviours: www.ukna.org helpline 0300 999 1212 (10am-midnight, 7 days/week). Online meetings also available via website.

Al-Anon Family Groups offer support to anyone whose life is, or has been, affected by someone else's drinking, regardless of whether that person is still drinking or not. www.al-anonuk.org.uk
Freephone helpline 0800 0086 811 (10am-10pm 365 days/year) or email helpline@al-anonuk.org.uk

Family/Relationships

Families come in all shapes and sizes with different needs and expectations. Finding realistic ways to manage these needs and expectations, together with finding time for yourself, can help reduce stress over the festive period. Talk with family and friends well in advance of the holiday period to try to reach a compromise that will suit everyone. If you are worried about the financial cost also consider spending limits or alternative gift ideas which don't need to be bought.

Relate offer relationships services for families and couples www.relate.org.uk

Family Action provide practical, emotional and financial support to those who are experiencing poverty, disadvantage and social isolation across the country. Their website includes time availability for support via telephone, text, email and web chat www.family-action.org.uk

Carers UK provide information and support to those providing care www.carersuk.org freephone advice line 0808 808 7777 (10am-4pm Mon and Tues)

Mind provide information related to and tips for managing loneliness at <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/loneliness/#.XXd82cbfPct>



Grief

The holiday period can be a particularly painful time of year whether you have been bereaved for some time or this is the first year without a loved one. Anniversaries and special events can evoke strong memories and emotions ranging from happiness to sadness, fear, anger or guilt, every experience of bereavement is unique, so too are the emotions felt in relation to particular occasions.

'Cruse bereavement care' provide information, advice and support to children and adults in relation to grief and bereavement

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/>
and helpline: 0800 808 1677
(see website for opening hours)
and have information dedicated to coping at Christmas at: <https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/about-grief/anniversaries-and-reminders-when-you-are-bereaved/coping-at-christmas>

Bereavement Advice Centre:
Freephone helpline (Mon-Fri
9am-5pm) 0800 634 9495

Website: www.bereavementadvice.org

Child Bereavement UK:
Freephone helpline (Mon-Fri
9am-5pm) 0800 028 8840

Email: support@childbereavementuk.org

Website: www.childbereavementuk.org

Domestic abuse

Incidents of domestic abuse have been shown to increase significantly during the festive period. No matter the time of year 'Refuge' provide a 24 hour, 7 day per week Freephone helpline: 0800 2000 247, and can be contacted by email during office hours (Mon-Fri 9am-5pm): helpline@refuge.org.uk and have information available on their website www.refuge.org.uk/

The NSPCC have 24 hour 7 day per week freephone helplines for adults concerned about a child: 0800 800 5000 and Childline for confidential support and counselling for children and young people: 0800 1111

Finances

Remember that monthly bills will need to be paid as usual after the holiday period, good money management will help to reduce financial stress during and after the holiday season. Think about priorities (including bills and usual living expenses) and the budget you can realistically afford to spend. Try writing a list of gifts (and the amount you can spend for each person) and groceries to help keep to your budget. Shop around for the best prices and recycle where possible, such as gift bags and bows. When shopping online order more than one item from a retailer at the same time (where possible) to reduce delivery costs.

General financial information, including budgeting and managing debt, may be found at: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/
www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk

Medical availability

Prescription medications

If you are taking prescribed medication on a regular basis remember to check that you have enough of all medications to see you through the holiday period and into the New Year when normal GP services resume, as you may find it difficult to obtain a repeat prescription and/or have the prescription filled over the holidays.

Seeing a GP if you are away from home

You can register as a temporary resident with a GP practice in your current location if you are visiting for more than 24 hours but less than three months. Information can be found at:

<https://www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/nhs-services-and-treatments/how-can-i-see-a-gp-if-i-am-away-from-home/>

NHS 111

The NHS 111 service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days per week either online (for those over 5 years of age only) go to 111.nhs.uk or by phone by dialing 111 (available for use relating to patients of all ages). Use this service if you have an urgent medical problem and are unsure what to do, depending on the situation you will be given advice, connected to a medical professional or provided an appointment.

If you have communication difficulties NHS 111 can be contacted via a textphone by calling 18001 111 or through the British Sign Language interpreter service: <http://www.interpretnow.co.uk/nhs111/>

Further information relating to NHS 111 can be found at:

<https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/urgent-and-emergency-care/nhs-111/>

Accident and Emergency departments

A hospital's emergency department should be used for serious medical conditions such as chest pain, acute confusion or loss of consciousness, severe bleeding or burns and not as an alternative to a GP appointment. NHS 111 can provide advice if you require urgent medical attention but are unsure which service you need; however, if you think life is at risk you should dial 999.

Not all hospitals have an accident and emergency department, your nearest department can be found online at <https://www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/Accident-and-emergency-services/LocationSearch/428>

Urgent treatment centres

The NHS has updated all of its current mix of walk-in centres, urgent care centres, minor injury units and urgent treatment centres to be either Urgent treatment centres or, providers of other forms of health care. Urgent treatment centres are equipped to manage a wide variety of urgent, but not life threatening, conditions. You may be directed to one by NHS 111, by a GP or you can just walk in.

Dental emergency

If you need emergency dental treatment contact your usual practice who will be able to advise whether they can see you directly or they may be able to signpost you to alternative urgent dental care services. If you are not registered with a dental practice, contact NHS 111 for advice.

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