10 Ways to Look After Your Mental Health at Christmas

The festive season is a time of joy and spending time with loved ones, but it can also be one of the most stressful and lonely periods of the year. During the December rush - frantic present buying and New Year party preparations - followed by the sudden 'lull' of January, it is important to try and remember how to maintain your mental health and wellbeing. Here are 10 ways to take care so you can avoid feeling overwhelmed.

Talk About Your Feelings

It's hard to admit that at such an exciting time of year, you don't actually feel that great. But talking about your feelings can improve your mood and make it easier to deal with the tough times. It's part of taking charge or 'self-managing' your mental wellbeing and doing what you can to stay healthy. It's important to create space for these conversations and also worth identifying who you can speak to if you are concerned about your wellbeing.

Eat Well

Christmas is typically a time of overindulgence, but what we eat can sometimes impact on how we feel. For example, too much sugar can have a noticeable effect on your mental health and wellbeing in the short and long term. Christmas wouldn't be Christmas without a little bit of overindulgence, but a good tip is to balance this out over the festive period – everything in moderation!

Keep in Touch and Reach Out

When putting the finishing touches on holiday plans, we can often become distracted from the support systems around us and lose our footing. Friends and family can make you feel included and cared for. They can offer different views from whatever's going on inside your own head, keep you grounded and help you solve practical problems – enjoy this time to catch-up. If alone and/or away from family, the Campaign to End Loneliness provides some helpful resources.

Take a Break

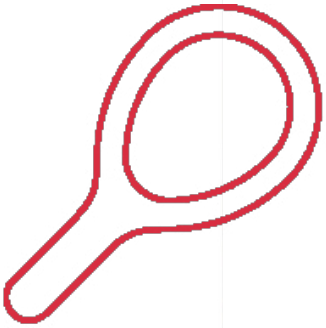
The holiday season is the perfect opportunity to take some time out of your day to day life, and gain some perspective to reflect on the year. Whether spending time away from home or having a stay-cation, re-energise by giving yourself a change of scene or pace- it's good for you! Practicing mindfulness can help you unwind, for more information on how to learn and to take a free stress test, visit www.bemindful.co.uk.

Accept Who You Are

Some of us make people laugh, others cook fantastic meals. Some of us share our lifestyle with the people who live close to us, others live very differently. If you have mental health problems, don't feel pressured to do more than you feel up to. Remember Christmas is just one day of the year! So whether alone or with others this Christmas, celebrate who you are.

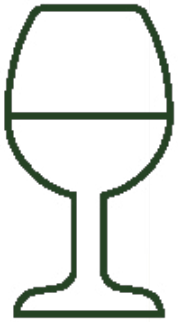
Keep Active

It's no surprise that cold weather and short days are not the greatest motivation to get you out of bed and on a 5k run! But research shows that doing exercise releases chemicals in your body that can make you feel good. Regular exercise can boost your self-esteem and help you to concentrate; sleep and feel better. Exercise also keeps the brain and your other vital organs healthy. So use that Christmas spirit for physical health as well as mental health - you might even enjoy the crisp air (again everything in moderation!).



Drink Sensibly

Some people drink to deal with fear or loneliness, but the effect is only ever temporary. Christmas parties encourage socialising and it's very easy to get carried away, but know your limits - it's important to maintain your personal wellbeing too. For more information visit https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/



Ask for Help

Donning a Christmas jumper can make us feel pretty special, but none of us are superhuman. At times we all get overwhelmed by how we feel, especially when things go wrong. If things are getting too much for you in the next couple of months and you feel you can't cope, ask for help. The Samaritans are available to speak to all year round, their new free helpline number is 116 123 and calls to this helpline number do not appear on phone bills.

Do Something You're Good At

What do you love doing? What activities can you lose yourself in? Enjoying yourself helps beat stress. As busy as the holiday season gets, try and keep up the activities and the hobbies you enjoy all year round. You could turn these into festive activities, like making gifts, or socialising with friends, before spending time with family over the Christmas and New Year period.

Care for Others

Present-buying is not the only way of showing that we care about others. Christmas is the perfect time to reach out to loved ones who you haven't spent much time with in the past year; ask how they've been and whether they have plans for the holidays. Caring for others is an important part of keeping up relationships with people close to you. It can even bring you closer together and make you feel good!