



Coping with Christmas

A guide to looking after
your mental health over
the festive period.

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Tips for looking after your mental health over the festive period.



How can Christmas affect my mental health?

Whether or not Christmas is part of your life, your mental health might be affected by it happening around you. It's a time of year that often puts extra pressure on us, and it can affect our mental health in lots of different ways.

For example, you may:

- Feel alone or left out because everyone else seems happy when you're not.
- Wish you didn't have to deal with Christmas or find it stressful because of other events in your life.
- Feel frustrated by other people's views of a 'perfect' Christmas, if these feel different to your experiences.

Here's some information on how you can manage your mental health and how we can help you this Christmas.

Plan ahead

Think about what might be difficult about Christmas for you, and if there's anything that might help you cope.

If you're worried about being lonely or isolated this Christmas, think about ways you can pass the time. Arrange a phone or video call to see people you may not be able to meet over the Christmas period. After Christmas, Try to plan something nice to do so you have something to look forward to next year.

TIP: It might be useful to make a list of any services that you may need support from.

Manage relationships

You may see more people over Christmas who might not understand what you are going through and possibly ask difficult questions. If they are difficult, you could think of some answers in advance so you're not caught off guard or think about how to end difficult conversations.

It's OK to tell someone that you don't want to talk about something, however, if other people don't seem to understand how you're feeling, you could share this information with them. You could also think about writing down how you're feeling and sharing this with them, if conversations are difficult for you to have.

TIP: Reach out to somebody close to you over the festive period. It could be a phone call, a text or a visit.

Look after yourself

Setting a 'start' and 'finish' time for what you count as Christmas will help remind yourself that it won't last forever. Set your boundaries and say no to things that aren't helpful for you. Let yourself experience your own feelings. Even if they don't match what's going on around you, they're still real and valid.

Take time out. Do something to forget that it's Christmas or distract yourself and let yourself have the time and things you need.

TIP: Practicing self-care is a great way to look after yourself. Try doing something you enjoy such as getting a bath or reading a book that you like.

Talk to other people

Let people know you're struggling. It can often feel like it's just you when it's not. The people you tell don't have to be people who are already in your life, you could join an online community to talk others who have similar experiences to yours.

Remember you don't have to justify yourself to others even though you might feel pressured to, especially if someone asks a lot of questions. It could help to let them know that certain situations are difficult for you, and tell them what they can do to help. You might not be able to make others understand. That's OK. It's not your responsibility to convince other people, or get their permission to look after yourself.

TIP: Find a method of communication that feels right for you. It doesn't have to be face to face.

Get support

If you're struggling this Christmas, you may want to find support for your mental health. Our Information Line is open available to support you, your friends, family members or colleagues.

Call us on 01472 349991, email info@nelmind.org.uk, or text 07520 633447. You can also chat with us via Facebook.

TIP: Our website has a list of useful contacts who are available to support you with your mental health.

Coping with money worries

It can be tough to cope with the financial pressures of Christmas. This can be especially difficult if you're already struggling with money. And for many of us, the recent rises in costs of living will have made things even harder.

How you cope with the costs of Christmas will depend on your circumstances. So some of these tips might not be realistic for your situation. But it may help to try these ideas:

- Access support. Make sure you're claiming any extra money or support you're entitled to.
- Make lists, plans or a budget. Noting things down can sometimes make things feel a bit more manageable or help us think more clearly.
- Be open with others. It can be hard to talk about money. But being honest with others can help. You may be able to agree on ways you can make Christmas plans free or low cost.
- Try to avoid comparisons with the Christmas you see in adverts and social media. These often do not reflect reality and can make us feel bad about ourselves. It may help to take breaks from social media.

You could use the Turn2Us benefits calculator to work out what you might be entitled to. Citizens Advice also has information on how to get help if you're struggling to pay your bills. The Trussell Trust also have a free helpline for advice on accessing financial support.

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Tips for supporting others during the festive period.



How to support others at Christmas

Christmas and New Year can affect people's mental health in different ways.

For most people, Christmas can be a time of joy and celebration, but there are lots of reasons why someone in your life might find Christmas difficult. They might worry that they are a burden, or feel like they can't participate. Or they might have mental health problems that make certain parts of Christmas more difficult.

66 **The expectation to be happy over Christmas can feel like a huge burden following you around. You might feel forced to be cheery and smiley but in reality you are feeling like the weather – dark and grey.** **99**

Things that can help

Understanding that Christmas means something different to other people may help you support someone struggling this Christmas. Let them know you understand and you're there for them. Tell them they're not alone. Ask if there are things you can start, stop or continue doing and remember that they aren't trying to spoil Christmas, no one chooses to find things hard.

Ensuring you look after yourself is also important when supporting someone else. You may feel sad or conflicted.

TIP: It's ok to confide in someone about how this is affecting you. Your wellbeing matters too.

Things to avoid when supporting others

Don't make assumptions about why someone may be finding Christmas difficult. Don't ask intrusive questions about their past or experiences, you might never know why they find it difficult - it's often a deeply personal reason. You might want to know more, but you can support them without knowing their reasons.

Don't try to cheer them up, for example, try to avoid saying things like "but Christmas is supposed to be a happy time" or "you could enjoy yourself if you tried." It may also help to avoid saying things like "everyone else is enjoying themselves" or "there are people who have it worse."

TIP: Don't take it personally if they don't join in. It may feel disappointing, but it doesn't mean they don't care.

Learn more

Learning more about a mental health problem can help you support someone who may have a difficult time during Christmas. They might enjoy some parts of Christmas, but find other parts difficult. Being more informed about someone's mental health and their experience can help to:

- Reduce stigma, misconceptions and assumptions.
- Make Christmas celebrations more inclusive.
- Make you aware of what someone may find difficult.
- Create a safe space for someone to express their feelings and needs around Christmas.

For information or advice on how to support someone else, call 01472 349991 or email info@nelmind.org.uk

A man wearing a red Santa hat with white trim and three red hearts, and a red and black plaid shirt, is looking down at a laptop. He is sitting at a table with a white gift box with a red ribbon and a white card. In the background, there are red and white balloons. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting an indoor festive event.

Support your local Mind

Help us to be there for
more people in 2023

How you can support your local Mind

Any support that you can give will make a real difference to what we can do locally. By making a donation or fundraising for us, you are helping us to move closer to a world where nobody has to face a mental health problem alone, in 2023 and beyond.

Whether you want to make a one-off donation, or want to take on a challenge event to help support our work, we would be really grateful. Find out how you can get involved at www.nelmind.org.uk/make-a-donation/


We know money is tight at the moment due to the current cost-of-living crisis, but there are other ways that you can support us too, why not support us by volunteering?

Volunteering

Volunteering at North East Lincolnshire Mind can be a really rewarding and valuable experience. And there's more ways of doing it than you might think.

At North East Lincolnshire Mind we have many volunteers supporting with every aspect of the work we do. From office admin volunteers, events and fundraising volunteers, through to our trustees and front line volunteers, everyone really does play a huge part in helping us to be there for more people in North East Lincolnshire.

Want to volunteer? Find out more about our roles at www.nelmind.org.uk/volunteering/



The Single Point of Access line is available 24/7
over the festive period. If you are finding things
hard, please call 01472 256 256 (option 3)..

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