

SURVIVING THE FESTIVE SEASON

The festive season is, by its very nature, a busy and stressful time. Planning ahead and moderating our expectations can help enhance the sense of celebration and joy.

This fact sheet provides some information on common stressors during the festive season. It also has some ideas to take the edge of stress and inject some peace and calm.

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admin@positivesolutions.com.au



03 6223 5612



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The festive season is a time when we traditionally catch up with family and loved ones. This often involves travelling long distances to be together. The COVID-19 pandemic has changed this for many of us who will be separated from our loved ones during this special period. Some people find they are simply fatigued after a busy year, while for others bigger emotional issues rise to the surface. It can also be a time of loneliness or a heightened sense of loss for those who are bereaved. It is important to remember that it is not a happy time for everyone.

COMMON STRESSORS OF THE FESTIVE SEASON

- **Financial stress** - the festive season is an expensive time of the year. It is easy to fall into the trap of impulse buying and over spending. Financial pressures are common.
- **Over-indulgence in food and alcohol** - festive celebrations present an enormous smorgasbord of opportunities to overindulge.
- **Celebration Dinner** - the expectation to provide a traditional gourmet extravaganza can be overwhelming.
- **Heightened and unrealistic expectations** - advertising and social media provide an unrealistic picture of perfect, happy families enjoying luxurious celebrations and gifts. This can create pressures to recreate the perfect event.
- **Hectic Social Schedule** - trying to celebrate with everyone you know is impossible. The calendar of work dinners, afterwork catchups with friends and colleagues, school and dancing concerts can be exhausting.
- **Relationships** - stress, anxiety, and depression are common during the festive season. Some families experience increased family conflict.
- **Loneliness** - many people experience feelings of isolation and loneliness that can make this a very stressful time. COVID-19 will have amplified this for many people.
- **Bereavement** - all special celebrations, including the festive season can intensify feelings of loss and grief.



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FOR MORE INFORMATION

- www.beyondblue.org.au
- www.healthdirect.gov.au

It is normal to want this special time of year to be wonderful for everybody

FACTORS WHICH AFFECT OUR EXPECTATIONS

- Our family
- Bereavement
- Exposure to social media
- Advertising
- Pester power
- Social pressure (e.g. pester power)
- Relationships

SOME SURVIVAL TIPS

Create memories

- Let your focus be on the making of happy memories rather than the size and number of gifts.
- Involve the children in tasks. Let them help you. This may mean letting go of the need for everything to be “just so”, but the children will love you for it.
- Continue your family traditions and rituals, or create new ones. These help loved ones feel connected.

Practise moderation

- If you must attend every social gathering, moderate your eating and drinking. It is ok to say no.
- If you are concerned about over-eating and over-indulging in alcohol, plan some after lunch activities, for example, a game of backyard cricket or a beach walk.
- Keep track of your drinking, especially if you are driving.
- Delegate tasks. No-one can, or needs to do everything.
- Plan your budget and set boundaries for your shopping. Overspending can be bad for your mental health as well as your bank balance.
- Organise shopping ahead of time to avoid last minute and impulse spending.

Be Kind

- Be kind to each other and to yourself. Holiday celebrations can bring up feelings of sadness, loss and regret.
- Take a break from social media. Resist the urge to post every detail of your family time together.

Managing loneliness

- If you know you will be on your own during this season, start planning ahead to be with people you like and who can support you.
- Attend community events.

Practise self-care

- Remember that self-care is a gift you're giving not only to yourself, but also to family, friends, partners and colleagues. Taking time to care for yourself can have a calming effect on those around you.
- Learn to say no. Listen to your emotions, and know your limits.
- Make time for yourself to relax and rehydrate. Be active: get outdoors for a brisk walk, ride or swim.
- Maintain a good sleep routine; 8 hours if you can manage it.
- Take time to reflect and be grateful.
- There is no perfect celebration but there is one that is perfect for you. Make it your own. Be mindful and present and enjoy the day.

Adjust expectations

- Acknowledge that it has been a difficult year and adjust your expectations.
- Look for joy in being with your people, spending time and sharing stories.

Access support

- If you are finding it difficult to cope during this busy time you may wish to engage with workplace supports such as your Employee Assistance Program, or other supports such as your General Practitioner, a psychologist or counsellor.



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