

Looking after your mental health during the festive season



The festive period can affect your mental health in many different ways. Whether or not you celebrate Christmas, we have some top tips on how to look after yourself and others.



Looking after yourself:

- It's ok to prioritise what's best for you, even if others don't seem to understand.
- Let people know you're struggling. It can often feel like it's just you when it's not.
- Tell people how they can support you. For example, you could let them know any activities you'd like to be involved in, and those that you want to avoid. Or you might give them some examples of situations that might be triggering for you.



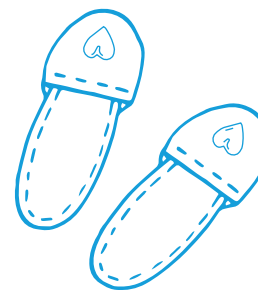
Think about what might be difficult about this time for you, and if there's anything that might help you cope. It might be useful to write this down.



For example:

- If you're planning on going away from home, e.g. to visit family or friends, think about what you need to help you cope. Are there things you can bring to make you feel more comfortable? Or is there somewhere you can go to take a break?
- We can sometimes over commit to joining in everyone's celebrations. If you're feeling overwhelmed by what you have committed try to think about if you need to go to a particular event. Could you agree to go for a limited time? Will there be people who you really want to spend time with? Could you arrange to meet colleagues or friends at another time or location?

- If you're going to be alone this Christmas, plan some activities that you enjoy to pass the time. Make a list of things that you can do that you know would make you happy. Buy yourself some delicious treats to eat. Plan some fun movies to watch. Get outside and go for a nature walk. Spending time in nature is a great way to connect with the environment around you, whilst getting some mood-boosting exercise.
- If you celebrate other religious festivals or holidays, you might feel overshadowed by the focus on Christmas. Think about how you can share the traditions and activities you take part in with colleagues and friends.
- Plan something nice to do after the festive period. Having something to look forward to next year could make a real difference.



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The festive period is a hard time of year for lots of people, for many different reasons. It can make existing problems worse, and add new ones. Here's some top tips for supporting others who might find this a challenging time.

Do

- Let them know that they're not alone, and that you're there to listen if they need you. Sometimes this might be all they need.
- Listen to what they say and accept their feelings, even if it's hard to.
- Ask them about what you can do to support them.
- Look after yourself. Supporting someone else can be difficult. For example, you might feel sad or conflicted. It's ok to confide in someone about how this is affecting you. Your wellbeing matters too.

Don't:

- Don't make assumptions about why the festive period is difficult for others. None of us know how others are really feeling on the inside.
- Don't belittle or dismiss anyone's feelings around the festive period. Try to avoid saying things like "be happy", "everyone else is enjoying themselves" or "count yourself lucky, lots have it much worse". These statements may be well intended, but can invalidate the feelings of the other person and make them feel worse.
- Don't force people to take part in festive activities, and try not to take it personally if they don't join in. There are many different reasons, including cultural and religious ones, why people wouldn't take part. It's important to respect their decision.

Get Support

The [Mental Health UK website](#) has a wealth of information and resources you can use to manage your own mental health and support others with theirs.

Visit [Clic](#), our online community where you can speak safely and openly about how you're feeling and get mutual support from people who understand how it feels.

If you or someone you know is in urgent need of lifesaving help, please call 999 or go to your nearest Accident & Emergency (A&E) department.