



With thanks to our Mental Health Support Team for putting this together.

The A to Z of a more relaxed Christmas.

Christmas is a magical time for most- the religious meaning, the tree, the songs, the lights, the films, the gifts etc. But what about those families who struggle over the holiday time? It can be a time of stress for many people for a variety of reason- money worries, family separation, housing issues and illness for example.

The pressure on parents to have ‘a perfect Christmas’ can be enormous- social media plays a huge part in this, people posting pictures of how their homes are decorated, huge piles of presents, trips out to see Santa or other Christmas activities, and the 2 recent additions to the pressure, the elf and Christmas eve boxes!

Children are subjected to targeted adverts, in the run up to Christmas, showing the latest ‘must have’ toys, phones, games etc and they might expect everything they ask, not realising the costs, especially younger children. Peer pressure can cause stress to some children, hearing what others are expecting to get might make them feel inferior or lead to worry of bullying on return to school.

Finding ways to lessen the pressure on all the family, can help to make the time more enjoyable for all concerned.

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- A. Ask for help. Don't try to do everything yourself, get other members of the family to pitch in too.
 - B. Boundaries, it is an exciting time, especially for little ones, and it's easy to let things slip. Children can try to push against the usual boundaries, but this can then make it difficult for them to regulate their behaviour which can lead to upset for all.
 - C. Cuddles and a cuppa. When you feel pressured and busy, it's easy to forget the calming effect of a cuddle from someone you love can be.
 - D. Decide what is important for yourself and your family. Is it an all singing and dancing Christmas or is a more low-key time spent as a family better for you?
 - E. Elf on the shelf. This is a recent addition for some families but the actual stress to thinking of different 'naughty' thing for the elf to do can be one pressure that can be too much. While the children might enjoy it, is it necessary?
 - F. Family and friends. Often Christmas is a time to spend with family or friends that you might not see often. This can be a pleasure or a stress. If meeting with someone is bad for your mental well-being, then maybe you don't.
 - G. Gratitude. Sometimes we are so busy thinking about what we want in life, we forget about what we have. If you have a roof over your head and food to eat then be thankful, others in this world don't have.
 - H. Hydrate, making sure you drink enough water is important so that your brain and body can function properly.
 - I. Indulge, often Christmas is a time for eating and drinking too much, remember to eat healthier when you can.
 - J. Jobs, delegate some of the tasks to other family members. Don't feel you have to do everything yourself.
 - K. Know what you are doing and when. Planning your time can reduce the worry of missing something important and is very useful for children who might struggle with the change of routine, knowing what and when things are happening, can help lessen their stress.
 - L. Listen to your body. Getting enough rest and down time will keep your energy levels up.

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- M.** Move, getting out in the fresh air can help clear your head, give you thinking time and help you to relax.
 - N.** NO! Feel able to say no to others who are adding to your pressures. You don't have to go anywhere or meet anyone if this will cause you upset or extra stress.
 - O.** Organisation. Make lists, reminders on your phone, post it notes stuck around the house can all help you to stay on top of things. Knowing what, where when can make you feel more in control.
 - P.** Play. Children get new toys and games and want to be able to play with them. Allowing them time to play with their toys and not having to be going out all the time is important.
 - Q.** Quiet time. Having the time to relax with your feet up occasionally.
 - R.** Routines. It can be easy to get out of your family routines over the holiday time. This can be because usual services have shut for a break, or it can be that you feel too busy. Children can struggle with this so trying to keep some routines such as bath time and bedtime can help them.
 - S.** Simple. Don't make things harder than they need to be. Don't feel that you can't buy ready prepared food or use paper plates. If this cuts down the stress, then that is perfect.
 - T.** Traditions, we all have things that we do over the holiday because that is what we have always done. It might be something small like getting a new decoration for the tree or watching a certain film, but other things can cause more pressure- seeing people who you might not get on with. Maybe start a new tradition, one that doesn't cost money, doesn't cause stress and everyone will enjoy.
 - U.** Unplug. Take time away from social media if this is a source of stress.
 - V.** Value. What is it about the holidays that you value the most? Some like the hustle and bustle while others enjoy a quieter time.
 - W.** Work. Switch off from work- no phone calls, no emails.
 - X.** (e)Xpectations. Be realistic with what you expect from yourself, others, and the holiday. Trying to be perfect can put huge pressure on yourself.
 - Y.** You come first. Remember if you don't take care of your own well-being then you won't be able to help others.
 - Z.** ZZZ. Remember to get enough sleep.



Kirklees Mental Health Support Team The Christmas Mental Health Planner

Things I want to achieve:

Things I want to do:

Exercise I want to do:

People I want to see:



Here are some websites that may help:

<https://parentsonline.co.uk/> - Chat service is available from 6pm to 9pm Monday to Friday.

www.actionforchildren.org.uk/how-we-can-help/get-parenting-support/ - Includes 1:1 Chat service

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/> -Includes Parent Helpline and Webchat

<https://www.annafreud.org/parents-and-carers/>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/christmas-and-mental-health/christmas-coping-tips/>

<https://nopanic.org.uk/coping-with-the-festive-season/>

<https://www.familylives.org.uk/advice/divorce-and-separation/coping-with-holidays/coping-with-christmas-when-your-divorced-or-separated/>

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/understanding-grief/effects-of-grief/christmas/>

<https://www.winstonswish.org/coping-with-grief-at-christmas/>

<https://www.papyrus-uk.org/>

<https://mindedforfamilies.org.uk/young-people/>