

12 TIPS FOR CHRISTMAS

A guide to unwrapping Christmas stress.

It may be the season to be jolly but for many, Christmas means large portions of stress with all the trimmings.

Nearly one in two adults say that a festive argument has made them want to end it with their partner.

One in four feels that their relationship is under pressure over Christmas.

National charities Relate and the Samaritans report huge increases in calls during and after the Christmas period; the phones of divorce lawyers ring frantically in January.

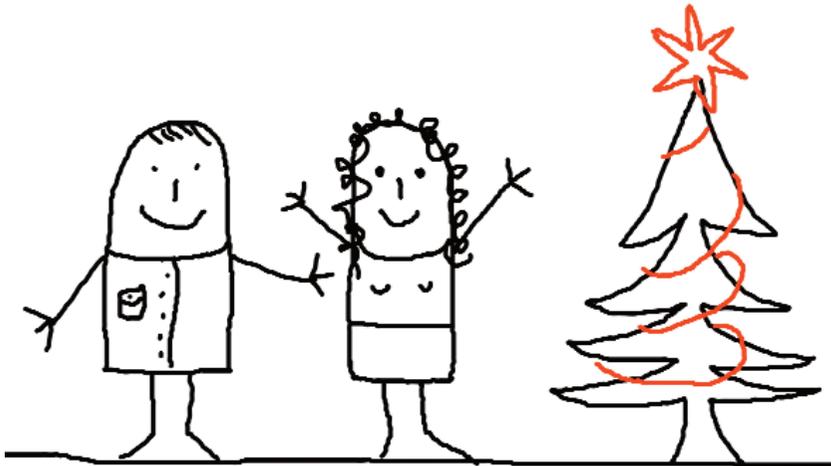
“If you’ve had bad Christmas experiences before, these can build the fear of the same happening again” commented anger specialist Mike Fisher.

“Focusing on one day a year evokes a lot of feelings in people, the expectation is high. With increased expectation comes increased stress, and while this doesn’t necessarily cause anger, it can have a fuelling effect.

“Something which happened on 25th June might have passed us by at the time, but come Christmas Day, the same event again could trigger anger, which added to the build up of stress, could develop into rage.”

He explains that situations which aren’t resolved at the time can again be focused on over the festive period. This common reaction accounts for the national rises in cases surrounding domestic violence, divorce and stress at Christmas.

Calls to Beating Anger clinics rise at this time of year; for many Christmas stress can start as early as October. To highlight the effect the festive period can have on people’s mental wellbeing, we have compiled the following 12 tips and advice on how to reduce stress levels, communicate more and reduce the chance of conflict.



For further information please call: **0345 1300 286**

or email: admin@angermanage.co.uk

or visit: www.angermanage.co.uk



12 TIPS FOR XMAS



1. Manage expectations

The build up to Christmas is exciting, especially for young children. However, this is also a time when financial stress can build and if the items on Father Christmas' list aren't feasible, it's important that the surprise isn't saved until Christmas morning. Be open with your children about the cost of presents and give them an idea of what is affordable.



2. Queue jump

Avoid the last minute chaos of the high street and shopping malls by thinking ahead. Make a list of the items you need to get and delegate if necessary!

3. Cutback commitments

If the thought of another drinks party with the neighbours or mince pie with the XX adds to the festive headache, politely decline. Be sensible about the amount of time you can commit to entertaining and being entertained! If the Christmas break provides a welcome opportunity to relax then take it.

4. Share

If the Christmas build up leaves you feeling overwhelmed, share your concerns with someone close. Confiding in someone else will help you to rationalise your worries. Plan to also share the responsibility for the day itself, so that its success does not rest on your shoulders and in your mind.





5. Healthy mind

Exercise will help clear the mind and often, remove you from the immediate and often chaotic environment of home. Lack of exercise can be a contributor to the build up of stress, particularly when coupled with festive over indulgence.



6. Be better, not bitter

It's inevitable at some point over Christmas – we'll be stuck in a corner with or sat next to the person we spend the rest of the year trying to avoid. Resorting to rudeness will only add to the build up of stress and anger. Avoid lowering your tone to their level and instead, diffuse the situation with polite, respectable behaviour.



7. Keep perspective

Remember who and what is important at times of intense stress. The moment will pass and you'll find comfort in letting it do so without the build up of emotion.

8. Avoid excess

Alcohol is responsible for many an argument as drinking lowers your defences and can change your mood. It can be more difficult to keep a perspective while under its influence. Consuming too much food, particularly of the rich and sugary nature can also lead to mood swings and dips in general wellbeing.





9. Think ahead

What normally sets you off at Christmas?
Are there recurring conversations or arguments that you could avoid or change in the way you handle them. Planning ahead and considering the bigger picture could make a positive difference in the way in which you communicate and handle previously difficult people and situations. Identifying the sources of our anger and what triggers it is key to responding to a situation.

10. Find some calm

If you find yourself getting angry, remove yourself from the situation. Walk away and find a quiet place if you can – this will give you important time to calm your mood and think about the bigger picture. If you need an excuse, tell others you are getting some fresh air or going for a walk as you've eaten too much.



12. Relax

Don't give yourself a hard time about making Christmas perfect. The responsibility doesn't rest with one person and it's worth always remembering that for most, it's just one day of the year.



11. Learn to listen

Listening is a skill, but one that is easy to master and useful for avoiding arguments. Listen carefully to the other person is saying and show your understand their point of view – even if you don't agree with it. Choose your words carefully to avoid the build up of emotion e.g. avoid “you always...” and instead use “you sometimes...”. Speak at a normal volume, don't shout; don't argue, instead discuss.

