

The TLC Communicator

How to Survive the Christmas Blues

Are you one of the many people who are part of a family that have trouble coping with Christmas? In September do you start to feel uneasy, restless or even sick about this years problems, dramas and fights that will happen around the Christmas table? Well you are not alone. Many, many people dread Christmas because of the family dramas that always happen.

We're in that psychologically menacing month when unresolved emotional conflicts, loneliness and other problems trigger an alarming rise in stress, pressure, psychiatric emergencies, murders and suicides. It is also sited as when there are more pressures on couples than any other time of the year.

Christmas and New Year are a stressful time. People eat and drink more than usual, change their normal patterns of sleep and exercise, contend with frustrating traffic jams, over crowded shopping centres and spend more money than they can afford, on gifts that sometimes are less than appreciated.

But is it not all doom and gloom, it's also a time where the people we love and who love us make more of an effort to catch up and spend time together.

I, like a lot of you, have a family that can be trying. I only have Christmas every second year to appease a sibling who wishes to be an only child. So every second year I find myself at a loose end. So what do I do? I mix it up, some years I spend the day with friends who I love to bits and other years I have spent my day serving lunch to the homeless and less fortunate than myself at the John Franklin Christmas Day Lunch held St Patrick's Church at Sutherland. This has been one of the most humbling and rewarding experiences of my life and one I will continue to do in future years.

Here are a few tips to help you survive the stress of Christmas:-

- ✓ **Set realistic expectations** – Don't expect your mother to suddenly stop criticising you or anyone else within her sights or your uncle from telling ribald jokes. Expect your family to be their usual selves – both good and bad and know it's not about you, their behaviour is about them and the way they get their needs met.
- ✓ **Learn to say NO** – Don't accept every invitation that comes your way, people will not think less of you if you take some time out, I am sure if they had a choice they would too.
- ✓ **Laugh long, loud and freely** – Watch Friends reruns on Gem (Channel 9's new station), do fun things with the kids, search for jokes on the internet and have a family competition to see who can find the funniest. Camp in the backyard.
- ✓ **Sleep more and eat and drink less** – that's pretty obvious.
- ✓ **Spread the load** – If you are cooking for your family and the entire neighbourhood then delegate half the tasks to others. You don't have to be a slave to Christmas, that is your choice so if you choose to be the slave don't complain about it.
- ✓ **Have compassion** – Remember we are all doing the best we can with the coping skills we have, so have compassion for everyone, including yourself. There is a great exercise I do with clients & I have put the link here. It will only take you 30 seconds (really) to do but it will give you peace. <http://www.internationalavatarcourse.com/compassion.html>

The quote I would like to leave you with to close out this year I think is very appropriate:-

Family isn't about who you share blood with, but who you would give your blood for.