

Coping at Christmas

The holidays are approaching. A time when it can be hard when it should be easy. A time to spread the joy when it feels there's no hope. A time to give when you've got nothing left to give. It can be difficult, don't feel bad about that. At a time when you used to be racing down the stairs to find your presents under the tree to a time where you can barely move from under the cover. A time when love and happiness is all around and you feel trapped in a void. A time where people come together to celebrate but there's no energy left to do so. A time when all is meant to be okay and it's not. Remember this will eventually pass. Don't feel guilty for feeling the way you do. Whether you're worried about eating Christmas dinner to anxious about socially interacting with your family over Christmas dinner, you have a right to feel that way.

Christmas can be a hard time for many people for many reasons. There is an awful lot of pressure to entertain, cook, please people and a lot of financial pressure. The nights are getting shorter and the days are getting darker. You need to grieve as you realise the people who once surrounded you years ago during this time are no longer around. Whatever the reason, big or small, it is valid. Allow yourself some rest, it's a holiday. It's a time to rejuvenate and replenish by not having to work and spending time doing things you enjoy.

Don't allow the voice of the perfectionist to make you feel unworthy. Set realistic goals and not targets to beat the heat before. Give yourself some rest bite and remember you're only human. If you need time alone to grieve or reflect or to replenish allow yourself some time but don't let yourself be isolated. Remember to socialise and know your limits, don't do anything that feels too out of your comfort zone. Most importantly ask for help. You don't have to do this alone. It might be beneficial to talk to someone who will be around you at this time and explain why this time can be difficult for you. This way not only do you have some support but you also have a "get out of jail card". When it feels like it all gets too much, this person can support you through it or make an excuse to let you off. Give yourself the support of your loved ones.

Remember though it can be unhealthy or unhelpful to avoid challenging situations, it can often make the difficulty surrounding that situation harder and can prolong the pain you are feeling. If you feel like it gets too much don't put let your well-being suffer but don't escape as an easy way out. Find time to connect with the people around you and realise they love, value and support you. The best thing to give yourself this Christmas is hope. Find something to lift that weight even if it's by a millimetre and know it will get better. By taking notice of the smell of Christmas dinner cooking or of your little niece/nephew laughing. Be mindful of the sensory environment and live for the moment. Appreciate everything you have and everything you can become.

The most important thing to remember is that this can be a time that is hard for a lot of people. You are not alone in this. Maybe everyone around you seems festive and in the spirit but there is someone out there who feels very similarly to how you do. You aren't the only one.

A new year is coming and a change is just around the corner. You won't feel like this forever and things will get easier. Speak up and let your loved ones be aware of what's going on to make it easier for you and them. Don't beat yourself for not feeling festive or feeling joy in something you once used to wait all year for. It's okay not to be okay, even during Christmas. The time will come when Christmas will be something to celebrate, when hard times a distant memory and new beginnings are a step away. It may feel like you've given up but you've got so much more to give. There is so much left for you to do in this world. You can do this. You can get through this. Stay strong and believe in yourself!

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