

Christmas Stress...

In case you missed the news, Christmas is coming with all its inherent joys and strains. It is meant to be the festive season yet everyone seems to have expectations of you and yours to provide and perform. So much to do. So little time. And finding the money to fund the fare is tough for those with too few funds to spare.

For some people, Christmas just adds more functions to attend, more pressures to provide food and presents, more stress to get work commitments achieved and more demands to plan, attend or, in some cases, social events to dodge. For some, a visit to the dentist would be preferable.

Planning can pay dividends. It can give you an idea of where possible pitfalls lie and how to arrange your Christmas so that you and yours can enjoy and benefit from all it means. In doing so, take care not to set yourself unrealistic targets and deadlines.

Sadly, for others, the stress can be one of social isolation, the lack of warm human contact when you need it most and the need to get through what should be, a time of cheer when you see so little to be cheerful about.

Christmas can also be a time of reflection, of remembering family, friends and people who are not able to be with you at this time. Do try to think of the happy times and celebrate those.

Financially, Christmas can be taxing, too taxing. Try to set affordable limits on spending. The flashiest present isn't always the best. Christmas is not a time for competing for the best food, drinks or presents.

Nor is it a time for last minute panic impulse buying or overuse of credit cards. It often seems a good idea in December to put everything on plastic. It doesn't seem such a good idea in January.

If you are in paid employment – take care at pre Christmas parties by not over-drinking and over-performing – your next Christmas bonus may depend on your behaviour this Christmas.

If you do drink - drink well... not too much, not too often and enjoy yourself. Ensure others around you can enjoy themselves. Take special care when driving. It is not a time to lose your licence or worse, ruin some other person and their family's Christmas.

Plan, whether in employment or not, to have a day or two where you can rest up, recharge your batteries and think of the year that was and the year that will be.

Don't do it all yourself. Try being a little more assertive about doing what you can and cannot do. Christmas is a time for sharing – and that includes the shopping, cleaning, cooking and dishes.

Even more importantly, plan to do a few things that you really would like to do – read that book, see that film, visit that friend, go for that walk, spend the day at the beach or whatever it is that presses your buttons.

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