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Middle School Guidance Officer Article

12 Tips to Help You Look after Your Mental Health This Christmas

The Christmas period is marketed as a joyous, festive occasion and a time for celebration. Yet for many people, Christmas can also be one of the most chaotic, stressful and challenging times of the year, especially for their mental health. The stress of buying food and presents can heighten financial strain and cause people to feel pressured as we try to meet demands. The expectations of family togetherness can escalate tensions, while people who are separated from family and friends can feel isolated and lonely. For people who have suffered bereavement, the feeling of loss and sadness can be overwhelming at this time of the year. SuperFriend encourages you take heed of the 12 practical tips below to

1. **Budget, budget, budget** – Planning ahead when it comes to Christmas spending can help you stick to a budget and ease the financial burden of the Christmas period. Remember to try and enjoy Christmas within your means to avoid a Christmas financial hangover in the New Year.
2. **Keep presents under wrap** – If you have a large family or friendship circle, buying presents can be costly. To reduce the cost of gift giving for yourself, as well as those around you, why not suggest your group have a Kris Kringle, or set a reasonable limit on the cost of presents for each person.
3. **Don't shop 'til you drop** – You can limit the stress of Christmas shopping by making a list of the things you want to purchase, doing your shopping early (if possible), or shopping online to avoid the crowds.
4. **Preparing Christmas Lunch (or Dinner)** – Preparing a meal for family and friends can be enjoyable, but also tiring and stressful at the same time. To reduce the stress of Christmas cooking, you could consider delegating tasks; you shouldn't have to do everything yourself. Keep things simple, and request your guests bring a platter of food to help share both the cost and the workload.
5. **Managing relationships** – Stress and anxiety over the Christmas period can heighten tensions between family members and/or friends. It is important during this time to have realistic expectations of yourself and others. To limit arguments, avoid known triggers and use relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing or focusing on your breath, to help you manage feelings of anxiety or tension.
6. **Try to be moderate** – Whilst 'tis the season to be jolly, overindulgence in food and alcohol can have a detrimental effect on your mental health and general wellbeing. Try to include as much fruit and vegetables in your diet as possible and limit your alcohol consumption.

7. **Keep moving** – Despite the Christmas period being a holiday for many, keeping up a regular exercise routine can not only reduce stress and increase serotonin levels helping to elevate your mood, it can also help counter act any overindulgence that may have occurred during the silly season!
8. **Get some rest** – Feeling tired can exacerbate stress and anxiety, so it's important to get plenty of sleep and take some time out for yourself, to give your mind some rest

Read more: *12 Tips to Help You Look After Your Mental Health This Christmas*

Anna Willis,
Middle School Guidance Officer