



## Tips for Managing the Christmas Season



by the Civil Service Employee Assistance Service (CSEAS)

This article contains information and helpful tips on how to manage the Christmas season to ensure it is as enjoyable, peaceful and restful as possible.

### Managing Stress

“We wish you a Merry Christmas” is playing on the radio as you sit in your car at the local shopping centre, with your hazard lights flashing waiting for the next available parking space. Your mind is full of thoughts of what you have to do, you feel anxious and notice the start of a headache. You promise yourself next year it will be different. A picture of the Bahamas comes to mind.

Here are some tips that might help you in situations like this:

- Be aware of what causes you stress and look at ways to minimise it
- Consider what you could do differently to manage your stress better
- Do more of what you like to do and less of what you should do
- Place realistic expectations on yourself



*Mindfulness is a powerful technique in stress management. It is based on the concept of living in the moment and attending not to the past or future but only to the here and now.*

### Dealing with Family

Christmas conjures up picture perfect images of idyllic family scenes. While this may be your hope and you may achieve some version of this, the reality may differ. Christmas can be fraught with emotions and family tensions.

If you anticipate some tension over the festive season consider:

- The need to be respectful of the rules of the house you are visiting
- Changing the script and not falling back into old familial roles
- Limiting the amount of time you will be under the same roof
- Taking time out if a heated situation develops

### Alone at Christmas

If you know that you are going to be on your own for Christmas, take time to plan

what you are going to do so you don't feel lonely:

- Have a routine in your day
- Plan what you are going to wear and what you would like to eat
- Get some exercise, take a walk to your favourite place if possible
- Organise some treats for yourself
- Ask a friend if he/she/others are available to share Christmas lunch
- Consider doing some voluntary work e.g. arrange a visit to a nearby nursing home to help with serving food or to chat with elderly people



*Acts of kindness are rewarding for both the giver and receiver.*

*The dark evenings can be an anxious time for older people on their own.*

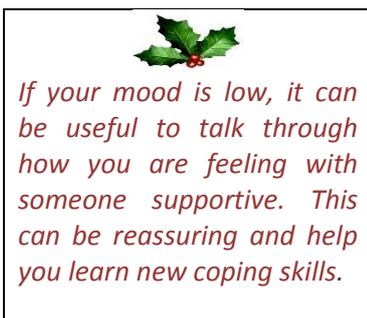
*If you have a moment free this Christmas, check in on an elderly neighbour to ensure they have sufficient food, fuel and medication.*

### Coping with Grief

Christmas can be lonely for those suffering the loss or death of a loved one. Everyone else may appear happy and there may be an expectation that you follow suit, but your sadness is too great. Try not to isolate yourself.

While your pain cannot be taken away, things might be made a little easier by:

- Planning ahead in the knowledge that things will be different without the person
- Keeping it simple: do only what is really important and feasible for you
- Acknowledging the loss in whatever way you are comfortable with
- Accepting offers of help whether these are practical or emotional



### Outside pressures and influences

At Christmas it is common to be surrounded by images of happy families, smiles all around and luxurious gifts. This may be, but it is not

always the true picture of Christmas for all.

Advertising around Christmas is mainly associated with buying and gift giving. The effort of “keeping up with the Jones”, and the expectation placed on families to be able to provide all the newly launched products and toys can be very stressful. Often families feel obliged to spend more than they can afford which can result in financial problems.

These are some points to think about:

- Create realistic expectations
- Don't be afraid to talk about these with family
- Remember every family celebrates Christmas in its own way with their own traditions and values
- Create new memories and traditions

### Financial Matters

Christmas happens at the same time every year. Take time to prepare for it:

- Make a budget so you know what you have to spend
- Stick to your budget by planning what you want to buy before you go shopping

- Start early and look out for sales and discounts
- Avoid promising gifts beyond your budget
- Be creative

### Eating and Drinking

For many people Christmas is a time of indulgence where we consume much more than we normally would. Adverts tempt us to give in to the excesses - until January when all that is marketed are weight loss solutions!

To enjoy the festivities within the limits of what you are happy with try:

- Retaining some structure in your regular diet and exercise routine
- Hosting a meal in your own home where you control menu and portion sizes
- Keeping a perspective - food and drink are just two of many pleasurable activities
- Not berating yourself if you cannot resist, there is always a next time



## Support Services

There are many organisations that provide information and support regarding the range of issues that you may need help with not just at Christmas, but throughout the year. Consider familiarising yourself with these services before a difficulty arises.



### Useful Contacts include:

The **SAMARITANS** are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. If you need an immediate response, it is best to call the helpline on **Telephone 116123**. You can talk to them at any time you like, about anything you like.

**AWARE** offer support to those experiencing depression. Their helpline number is **1890 303 302**

## Role of the CSEAS

The Civil Service Employee Assistance Service (CSEAS) is also here to assist. The Employee Assistance Officer (EAO) in your area can provide you with emotional and practical support.

## Conclusion

We hope that everyone has a peaceful Christmas full of joy and hope. For those who do face challenges over this period, the material above may be helpful.

Keeping in mind what is contained in this article, and bringing your own ideas to bear, you will find your way to deal with this time of the year. Please do take care of yourself and

remember that assistance is available. If something is troubling you, reach out for help.

Be realistic in terms of your expectations of yourself, Christmas day and the season as a whole.

Happy Christmas and every good wish for the New Year from all at the CSEAS.

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Please visit the CSEAS Website [www.cseas.per.gov.ie](http://www.cseas.per.gov.ie) for information on the CSEAS.

Seirbhís Chúnaimh  
d'Fhostaithe na Státseirbhíse



Civil Service Employee  
Assistance Service

### Contact details for the CSEAS are

- Tel: 0761 000 030 (on-duty EAO available 9am to 5.45pm Monday to Thursday, and 9am to 5.15pm Friday, except Bank Holidays)
- Email: [cseas@per.gov.ie](mailto:cseas@per.gov.ie)
- Website: [www.cseas.per.gov.ie](http://www.cseas.per.gov.ie)

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