



Coping with Christmas

We hope you and your loved ones have a very happy holiday, filled with gratitude, warmth and recovery!

However, Christmas can be stressful, even if you're not struggling with an eating disorder. And since this holiday is centred around food, it can be that much more challenging for those who are. Here are some suggestions to help make this time run a little smoother.

Managing difficult situations can be easier when you have someone to support you. When you are feeling extremely triggered or upset, these are the people you can turn to for a listening ear or advice.

- Before the holidays, make a list of potentially supportive individuals. While a friend or family member who is nearby might be ideal, also consider friends and family members who are farther away. Even if you are only able to Skype or call them, their support could be invaluable.
- Once you have a list of people, try to have a conversation with at least a few of them - especially if you know the holidays might be extra-triggering or uncomfortable for you. Sit down with them and let them know your concerns and the ways they might support you. If you're not comfortable having the talk face-to-face, consider writing them a note.
- Or they might simply check in with you to see how you are doing throughout the day, being your ally to help you make it through.
- So, discuss your fears and devise a safety plan with someone you trust.
- **Know that you're not alone—not really.** The contrast of lively festivities and your inner struggle can make you feel lonely but it doesn't have to. "It might sound silly," said Kelly, "but just knowing that there are so many others out there dealing with these issues helps me feel less alone and even a little courageous."
- Look after yourself – find your favourite piece of music and play it when you are finding it difficult.
- Go outside – it is tempting to 'hibernate', but getting outdoors even for a short while can really help.
- **Run (or walk, depending on your current physical health) for a few minutes.** Or go up and down the stairs three times.
- **Help someone.** Carry a bag, open a door, or pick up an extra carton of milk for a neighbour.

- **Imagine you're your best friend.** If you were, what would you tell yourself right now? Look in the mirror and say it.
- **Take a home spa.** Have a long bath or shower, sit around in your dressing gown, and read anything you like.
- **Punctuate your day with a mini-meditation** with one minute of awareness of your thoughts, feelings, and sensations; one minute of focused attention on breathing; and one minute of awareness of your body as a whole.
- Feel free to turn down invites but structure your day around things you enjoy.
- If you plan to spend time alone, do things that make you feel good – listen to music, read a new book, watch your favourite TV programme or a DVD, pamper yourself, phone a friend.

Remember: you are not alone! Recovery is still possible – Xmas is just one day. Stay positive, look after yourself and enjoy whatever you do!

Useful Contacts

B-eat – national eating disorders charity

www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk

B-eat Helplines

Open 365 days a year, 3-10pm

Adults: call **0808 801 0677** or email help@beateatingdisorders.org.uk if you are over 18.

Youthline: call **0808 801 0711** or email fyp@beateatingdisorders.org.uk if you are under 18.

Mental Health Matters

www.mentalhealthmatters.com

Local helpline

Gateshead: **0800 085 1718**, 5pm-9am 24 hours, weekends & Bank Holidays.

Men Get Eating Disorders Too

www.mengetedstoo.co.uk

Online forum and peer support.

Email sam@mengetedstoo.co.uk

Samaritans

www.samaritans.org

Samaritans are always here when needed: phone (freecall) – **116 123**; text: **07725 90 90 90**; 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Email joe@samaritans.org

Saneline

www.sane.org.uk

365 days a year, 4.30-10.30pm.

