



Don't Limit your Challenges
- Challenge your limits



Avoid going Christmas Crackers -

(Keep your sanity, while all around you are losing theirs!!)



Christmas is the time of course to be home in heart as well as body
(Gary Moore)

Christmas - we all dream of the 'perfect' festive season; snow, Santa, presents, games, fun, families.....

Yes, it's that time of the year again; the festive season is upon us and, even though we said, this year - we were going to be organised, were not going to get stressed and were not going to buy into the commercial chaos Christmas has become - here it is and here we go!!

The stress levels are already beginning to shoot of the dial.



The truth is, most of us can get ourselves into a real tizzy at this time of year and for some, Christmas can also make existing problems seem even bigger.

Christmas is traditionally a season of joy, family reunions, friendship, giving and receiving, having fun and, most importantly, entering into the spirit of 'good will to all men'. Why then do we often get this overwhelming sense of pressure and stress?

It's important to keep things in perspective and remember that stress is part of our every day lives and it is only harmful when severe and / or prolonged. However, stress is also an aspect of living that can be beneficial when it motivates or inspires us. The first step towards successful stress management is being aware that occasions such as Christmas can raise our stress levels create tension within families and cause mayhem - *if we let it.*

So, is there an up side? Can we satisfy the needs of others, ourselves, and enjoy the festive season keeping our sanity at the same time?

In respect of Christmas, we know it's coming and most of us can think back fondly to memories in our childhood where the magic of Christmas shone brightly.





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Christmas is a time of year which does make demands on us physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually, so what can we do to help us cope, stay well and laugh, a lot -

Talk to your partner / family - about how you feel about Christmas. Discuss ways that you can help each other, ways you can simplify what you usually do - if your family home is where everyone comes for lunch, ask the visitors for help. Others like to be involved and feel they are contributing, you don't *have to* do it all yourself.

Focus on the positive - don't focus on all the things that can go wrong, think about the things you enjoy, the things that make you laugh. Ask for help with anything you are worried about and give yourself credit for the things you do well.

Don't look for perfection - it doesn't exist, sometimes this can be a hard one to accept, but it's the truth.

Laugh - a lot!! So what if some things don't go according to plan - it's not what happens, it's what you do with what happens and how you think about it; that's what makes the difference. Sometimes mistakes happen - its ok, let it go.



Saying NO - we often do things because we think it is what someone else wants and even though we are really busy and have no idea how we are going to fit it in, we can't say no. Well, *practice, practice, practice* - **say no**; you really don't have to please all of the people all of the time; doing things in a resentful way because you feel you *have to* creates an internal negative process that will manifest itself on the outside. This affects the way you behave which has a knock on effect in your dealings with others. Say no or do what ever it is because you *want to*.



Changing the norm - just because Christmas has been at your house for the last **?** years, doesn't mean you cannot change the routine if you want to. Don't be a slave to convention or a martyr to the cause, you never know, others may be queuing up for the job; they just don't want to hurt your feelings. Or maybe, family and friends would like to re-think the whole thing too. **Talk to each other** - talk to everyone involved, you may find they too want to break or change the routine. Communication can be the real key - if you talk to each other and all *agree* that you don't want to *disagree* over Christmas, concerns can be out in the open, and discussed in advance to find a solution and a way forward.





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Be patient - s l o w d o w n - set yourself realistic achievable tasks and the time in which to do them. Look at all you have planned, if there are things that can be left out without causing a stir - let them go. Give time to the children, they are excited and excitable at this time of the year, they won't remember that they had 4 desserts on Christmas day, but they will remember they had fun playing with you with their new toys / games / presents.

If you have invited family / friends who you know need to be handled carefully, decide in advance to have patience. Discuss with other family members, ask for their support in being tolerant, it is only for a short time - stay outside of any attempts to be drawn into an argument.



Build in proper 'me' time so you can spend quiet moments that will allow you to just be with yourself and not have to worry about what is going on elsewhere, for example -

- Listen to some favourite / soothing music
- Walk the dog and see the beauty that is everywhere
- Meditate
- Watch your favourite television programme
- Quiet bath with candles
- Enjoy a drink with your partner / family
- Curl up with a book
- Enjoy a nap
- Organise time just with your immediate family, have a special meal, involve everyone in the preparation



Acknowledge and accept difference - everyone is different, we all have our way of doing things. If someone is helping you and they don't do it quite as you would have done, it doesn't mean it is wrong, just different. We don't all do things the same way, appreciate the help, smile and say thank you and enjoy the advantages of having others involved in some of the work.

Enjoy it! - Christmas does not have to be a chore. Having a negative attitude and remembering past mishaps will guarantee you heading towards disaster for this festive holiday. Plan some festive things that all the family can participate in -

- Decorating the tree - have an easy meal, like pizza, put on Christmas music or a traditional Christmas film and have some fun
- Play traditional games that don't involve television, or that are highly competitive, things like, pass the parcel, oranges and lemons, fun games from childhood that everyone can enjoy and join in



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- Get everybody to 'mix' the pudding and make a wish – if you are buying one, still get everyone to make a wish
- Plan a family evening (without other relatives or friends) before or after Christmas
- Nourish your spiritual side; plan some activities that lift your spirits, children's school nativity, carol services / musical evenings that leave you feeling light hearted and uplifted.

Have an enjoyable, stress free, fun packed happy and joyous Christmas, filled with love and light

