



The holiday season can be a time of celebration, togetherness, and joy but for many, the holidays can bring added stress, anxiety and sadness. Issues such as financial hardship, family tensions, challenging social situations with friends or community, isolation, grief and conflict can easily intensify during this time. It is helpful, therefore, to have some strategies in place to manage these added pressures and to ensure that yourself, those you care about and your broader community are safe and connected this festive season.

- If you cannot spend the festive season with those you love, you can still connect virtually and include them in your celebrations. Through all the challenges of 2020, the one shining light has been the emergence of virtual platforms that can keep us connected with those we cannot be physically close to. If you are alone on Christmas Day, make plans in advance so that you can celebrate in your own way. It can be cooking yourself a special meal, going for a long walk, partaking in mindfulness or meditation, re-reading your favourite book, re-watching your favourite movie or attending a community event/gathering.
- For many people, 2020 has been a challenging, emotionally draining and stressful year. This festive season more than ever, it is important to not take on too much and over schedule yourself. Be realistic about your capacity during the festive season and share responsibilities and tasks with family and friends.
- Overindulge in laughter but be mindful not to overindulge in rich and fatty foods. Foods high in fat and sugar can affect and destabilise your mood.
- Christmas is more about presence than presents. What matters most are connections, laughter, shared experiences and making memories – not the amount of money that you have spent on gifts.
- It is also time to stop and reflect that whilst we might be looking forward to the festive season, for others Christmas is a reminder of sad, troubling, and traumatic events in their lives. Remember to be mindful and sensitive to the reactions of others. That grumpy person at the shops, that person who will not engage in any of the 'fun'...they all have own journey and story. When you find yourself thinking "what is wrong with you", think "what has happened to you" instead. Strive to be kind with your words, non-judgemental in your thinking and generous in your interactions (even when the other person does not demonstrate these things). You just might create a moment of happiness for someone who really needs it!
- With the opening of our borders, it is a time to maintain all the good hygiene and safety measure that have been put in place by the WA Government. Ensuring that you have downloaded the Keep Safe WA App is a good place to start.
- Trust your gut instincts this festive season and if you think somebody may be struggling – reach out and ask "Are you OK?", "How are you travelling?" – by connecting, asking and listening we can help our family, friends and members of our community feel more supported. Take the time to listen and encourage them to partake in help seeking behaviours. Remember there is immense power in CONNECTIONS.
- It's important to schedule time for yourself. SELF CARE is very important during the busy festive season. Allocate time to do things that are good for your physical, emotional and mental health – SELF CARE is the greatest gift that you can give to yourself.

- This time of the year it is very important to ensure that we are responsible and safe with our consumption of alcohol. Easy guidelines to follow:
  - Set yourself a drinks limit, count how many you've had and stop when you've reached it.
  - Have a few alcohol-free days each week.
  - Swap to low or no alcohol alternatives.
  - Delay your first drink.
  - Make every second drink a non-alcoholic drink.
  - Slow down your drinking.
  
- Reach out to people living alone and make them feel included. Invite them for a cuppa or deliver a hand-made Christmas card or some home baked treats. If you have developed a good connection, make a point of making a quick 'check in' phone call on Christmas Day to see how they are.
  
- Inevitably, this time of year brings its own stresses and strains. Putting strategies in place and being mindful about how you are feeling are the first steps to managing anxiety and enjoying the celebrations. Put your health and wellbeing FIRST and remember to be kind to yourself.

If you are feeling stressed out about Christmas, have experienced mental health problems like stress and depression in the past, or are concerned about the wellbeing of somebody that you care about, make sure you are familiar with where support can be accessed during the festive period:

**000 (emergency)**

**Rural Link: 1800 552 002**

**Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 659 467**

**Lifeline: 13 11 14**

**Lifeline Text Service: 0477 13 11 14 (only available 6:00 pm to 10:00 pm EST)**

**Lifeline WA Grief, Loss & Separation free counselling (08) 9261 4444**

**Beyond Blue: 1300 224 636**

**Kids Helpline: 1800 551 800**

**Mensline: 1300 789 978**

**Alcohol & Drug Support Line: 1800 198 024 or 9442 5000**

**Parent and Family Drug Support Line: 1800 653 203 or 9442 5050**

**Wheatbelt Domestic Violence Helpline 1800 353 122**

**Women's Domestic Violence Helpline: 1800 007 339**

**Men's Domestic Violence Helpline: 1800 000 599**

**Suicide Bereavement Service: 0474 076 849**

**Holyoake: 1800 447 172 or (08) 9621 1055**

**WACHS Wheatbelt Mental Health Service – (08) 9621 0999**