

## Avoiding Stress this Christmas



Christmas can be one of the most stressful times of the year. The cost and pressure associated with buying gifts, and the heightened expectations of family togetherness can all combine to undermine our best intentions. The following are some practical suggestions which can help you reduce 'Christmas stress' this year.

**Budgeting.** For many of us, the Christmas aftermath includes enormous credit card bills that can take months to clear. But Christmas doesn't have to be a financial nuisance if you plan ahead. Work out a rough budget for expected Christmas costs as early as possible and put away a certain percentage of your income each week/fortnight/month to cover your expected costs. If it isn't enough to cover your estimated expenses, consider recalculating your budget to a more realistic amount.

**Gifts.** It can become very costly if you have a large circle of family and friends to buy gifts for. You might be able to reduce the stress and cost of Christmas for everyone if you suggest a change in the way you all give presents. This could involve buying presents for the children only, having a Kris Kringle, or setting a limit on the cost of presents for each person.

**Shopping.** Make a list of all the gifts you wish to buy before you go shopping or you could be wandering aimlessly around the shopping centre for hours.

If possible, do your Christmas shopping early. Some well-organised people do their Christmas shopping gradually over the course of the year, beginning with the post-Christmas sales.

**Christmas Lunch (or Dinner).** Preparing a meal for family and friends can be enjoyable but tiring and stressful at the same time. If you are cooking lunch at home, try to delegate tasks. You don't need to do everything yourself. Consider trying to keep it simple by arranging a 'buffet' lunch, where everybody brings a platter. Or if you're planning to eat out, make sure you book well in advance as some restaurants may be fully booked for months before Christmas.

**Relationships.** Don't expect miracles. If you and certain members of your family argue all year long, you can be certain there'll be tension at Christmas gatherings. Avoid known triggers. For example, if politics is a sensitive topic in your family, just don't talk about it. If someone brings it up, use a distraction and quickly move on to something else to talk about.

**Despite your best efforts, you may find yourself feeling persistently sad, anxious, irritable or unable to sleep. If these feelings last for a while, you may want to speak with one of our qualified consultants. For a confidential discussion, contact Converge International on 1300 687 327.**

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