



## A merry Christmas?

We all know the scene. The aunt or uncle we see once a year at Christmas has been true to form. They've had a bit too much Christmas cheer, they're more than a little affected by the sun, and they've announced something about someone that they really shouldn't have. Everyone's a little bit awkward, not sure whether to pull them up on what they've said, or to just laugh it off as the silly season.

It's hardly surprising. You bring together a bunch of people who rarely see each other, add stress, sun and alcohol, and expect everyone to get along nicely. This might be OK in a workplace, or even with friends, where social etiquette keeps us in check. In a family environment though, social etiquette can quickly go out the window.

Dealing with relationship problems at any time is a challenge, and even more so in the hectic Christmas season. With the stress of Christmas, it's probably not the best time to try to patch up all the family problems, but a few preventative

measures can go a long way towards making for a smoother and more enjoyable Christmas.

### 1. Can you keep people separate?

If you know some people just don't get along, think about whether you can avoid having them in the same place at the same time for too long.

### 2. Can you offset the alcohol?

Offset the effects of alcohol by having available plenty of non-alcoholic drinks, lots of shade, and a range of foods.

### 3. Do you need to set some ground rules?

If you think a bust-up is likely, talking to people ahead of time, and setting some ground rules of expected behaviour, can sometimes help.

The best laid plans can go astray though. If you find that relationship problems are getting on top of you this Christmas, call Converge International on 1800 337 068. Our experienced counsellors can help you find ways to improve the relationships in your life.

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