




Wellbeing Tips

FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON

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Holidays can be challenging.

Without routine, it's still important to stay healthy and look after yourself. For some people, this time of year can be challenging. It can feel as though you've been taken away from your usual routine of studies or work and you may not get to see your friends, teachers or workmates as often as you would like. This might leave you feeling bored, unsupported, upset and sometimes • anxious. It's important to stay healthy and look after yourself. There are a number of ways to help you do this, and we've suggested a few tips below.

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EATING WELL

It's important to have a good balanced diet with less of the bad things (like junk food and lots of sugar) and more of the good things (such as veggies, fruit, whole grains and water). This can help with sleep, energy levels and general health and wellbeing.

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SLEEP WELL

Getting a good night's sleep helps you feel energised, focused and motivated. Developing a sleeping routine can help you sleep much better. To do this, try to wake up around the same time each day, get out of bed when you wake up and go to bed around the same time each night.

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BE SOCIAL

Social relationships are really important to your general wellbeing. Spending time with friends is also really important for keeping and building on existing friendships. Getting involved with volunteer work, hobbies, clubs or committees, or sports can help you feel connected to your wider community while also meeting new people.

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PLAY

Play is important for staying mentally healthy. Devoting time to just having fun can recharge your battery, revitalise your social networks and reduce stress and anxiety.

Headspace

CHRISTMAS SURVIVAL GUIDE



It's that time of year again when things can become a little bit stressed for one reason or another so it pays to be prepared! So if you're feeling more stuffed than a Christmas turkey (pun intended), check out our tips to help you through to the New Year.

1. Manage Your Expectations

It's hard to escape media and movies at this time of year that show images of happy families, thoughtful gifts, reunited friends and smiling faces. This may be a special and magical time that you enjoy but it may also be a very difficult time. We can be reminded of those we have lost and some people even feel really lonely at this time. Try not to expect too much - aiming for the "perfect" Christmas or assuming that everyone will be on their best behaviour may not be realistic.

2. Take Time Out For You

Even though Christmas is usually a time jam-packed with family visits and activities, it's worth while making sure you have time just to relax and have your own space. Taking time out might be all that you need to avoid some of the common family conflicts that occur over Christmas. Know your limits and listen to your emotions. Some things you can do to get time out include going for a walk, phoning a friend, finding a quiet place to relax, or putting in your headphones and listening to the music that makes you feel good.

3. Look After Yourself

Your body and mind needs sleep, healthy foods, exercise and rest to function at its peak. If you look after you body your mind will feel much better too. So take some time for yourself. If you're feeling run down you probably are. 2015 has been a busy year, so take time to reflect on what was and look forward to what will be.

4. Dealing With A Split Family

If your family is split it might be that you have to separate your time between your mum and dad's place. Sometimes it means going away and being away from friends over the holidays. It might also be a time when your mum and dad seem to be fighting, which can be pretty hard to cope with.

Work out a Christmas plan - Talk with your parents about how you're going to split your time at Christmas. If your parents live close by, you might want to do lunch at one place and dinner at the other (swapping each year). If you live a little further away than you can swap who you spend Christmas with each year.

Take time out - Spending time with someone you see very little of can be tough. It is also hard to stay in a place you may call 'home', but is not complete with all your stuff. Taking time out might help you to have more fun. You might want to chill out listening to some music, go for a walk or talk to a friend.

Holiday Survival Guide

Holidays can be a mixed bag: excitement about the season, time out from school or work... At the same time changes to routine, separation from friends, and family tensions can cause some people to feel stressed, isolated and alone. If you feel things are getting too much there are services open throughout the holidays:

KIDS HELP LINE (ages 5-25) and **LIFELINE** (all ages) are both open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and offer free and confidential counselling.



Call 1800 55 1800



Call 13 11 14



EHEADSPACE offers free online and telephone counselling for ages 12-25 from 9am-1am, 7 days a week.

Call 1800 650 890 or go to eheadspace.org.au

YOUR DOCTOR (GP) can provide support. Many doctors and medical centres are open over the holidays.

MENTAL HEALTH HELPLINE can provide information and connect you to local services.

Call 1800 011 511

IN AN EMERGENCY, if you are really worried about your wellbeing and don't think you'll be safe, **CALL 000** or go to the hospital emergency



STAY CONNECTED! Keep in contact with friends especially those who help you feel good about yourself

KEEP TO A ROUTINE. Get up in the morning, eat at usual meal times

GRAB SOME ZZZ. Most of us need at least eight hours of sleep at night and some of us need more. Go to bed early to get your shut-eye rather than sleeping late.

TUNE INTO MUSIC that relaxes you and lifts your mood. Even better, dance!

GET MOVING! Get involved in local activities, or go for a walk, swim, cycle, or skate with friends.

Cut down, cut out or **DON'T START WITH ALCOHOL, DRUGS OR SMOKES.** They can fuel arguments and have a really negative impact on your mental wellbeing.

CHECK IN WITH YOUR FRIENDS. They might be feeling lonely, bored or down and find it too hard to make the first move – suggest you meet up.

KEEP IN MIND: Parents, carers and family often get stressed about things at this time of year and might not realise how hard it is for you. Take them aside and let them know if you're struggling or need support.

SEEK OUT ADVICE AND SUPPORT. See over the page for people and places that can help.



YOU'RE NOT ALONE

🕒 24/7 Mental Health Services healthdirect

Beyond Blue <i>Anyone feeling anxious or depressed</i> 🌐 beyondblue.org.au ☎ 1300 22 4636	Kids Helpline <i>Counselling for young people aged 5 to 25</i> 🌐 kidshelpline.com.au ☎ 1800 55 1800	MensLine Australia <i>Men with emotional or relationship concerns</i> 🌐 mensline.org.au ☎ 1300 78 99 78
Open Arms <i>Veterans and families counselling</i> 🌐 openarms.gov.au ☎ 1800 011 046	Lifeline <i>Anyone having a personal crisis</i> 🌐 lifeline.org.au ☎ 13 11 14	Suicide Call Back Service <i>Anyone thinking about suicide</i> 🌐 suicidecallbackservice.org.au ☎ 1300 659 467

⚠️ **Is it an emergency?** If you or someone you know is at immediate risk of harm, call triple zero (000)



Finding joy and thriving through Christmas and the school holidays

Christmas can be a time for family, connection and celebration. For many this time also brings stress and other emotions like loneliness, sadness, disappointment and grief. Such feelings can arise especially if this is the first Christmas since a beloved family member has died, a couple have separated, or if there are complex relationship dynamics within the family. Financial strain can impact families as they try to pay bills and have money for extras like presents and parties.

For separated or blended families, deciding who the children spend Christmas Day with can be a very difficult issue to work through, especially when communication isn't always respectful. For many families, mixing relationship difficulties and old wounds can create a pressure-cooker environment, especially when adding alcohol into the mix.

While long summer school holidays are a welcome break from tiredness and the busyness of the school year, there can often seem like there is little respite for parents.

At Parent Line, we acknowledge all of the above and have created the following tips to support you to connect with your family and kids whilst taking care of your own needs, so you can survive and thrive through Christmas and the school holidays.

1. Plan and keep some normal routines

- On Christmas Day, plan eating times. When is the best time for gift giving? Maybe have some backup activities planned in case kids become overwhelmed, need to release some energy or family tensions build. Game of cricket anyone? Board game, walk or a swim? Have a Christmas movie downloaded that all the kids can enjoy.
- Get your kids involved in making a list of activities that they would like to do, planning for different kinds of weather.
- Schedule down time as well as time for family group activities, without trying to do too much.



Dr Justin Coulson, psychologist and father of six, offers the following wise suggestion: "For kids, make sure you maintain healthy routines. Keep them on a reasonable bedtime schedule and eating healthy foods. If they are having worries, talk about those and come up with an action plan. For example, if they're starting a new school, go for a walk-through of the school grounds. If they're missing their friends, arrange a play date".

2. Keep it simple this year

- Remember that keeping things simple reduces stress and creates a calmer atmosphere. Give yourself permission to take some short cuts with Christmas lunch, for example.
- Similarly, setting boundaries around the money spent on gifts can be helpful. Home-made gifts and cards or Kris Kringles can reduce spending and post-Christmas debt.



3. The best things in life are free

- To balance the extra spending that can often accompany this time of year, plan some free activities to reduce costs and to teach kids that they can have fun without spending or getting more stuff.
- Make sure your holiday activities list includes plenty of free activities like picnics, bike rides, trips to the beach and action in the great outdoors. Libraries, museums, art galleries, local councils and even local shopping centres, often offer kid-friendly activities, which are usually free. Follow the strengths and interests of your child.

4. Boredom is good

- Unstructured time and breaks from devices are good for young brains. This provides a brain break and the opportunity to explore, get creative and play. Kids may winge at first but remember that boredom can lead to resilience and inspiration, if we allow them to feel this very normal emotion.

5. Support and connection

- It's OK to ask for help to share the load. Where possible, ask the child's other parent, family or friends to help care for children or to provide support in other ways.
- Having a support system is crucial for any parent. This could be talking to a professional or getting to know other parents in your community. This gives parents the opportunity to interact with other parents whilst giving the kids a bit of play time. As connections develop, you could arrange playdates where kids are dropped off for a few hours. This gives the non-hosting parent a break and then can be reciprocated over the holidays.

6. Practice acceptance

- There is no such thing as a perfect family or holiday. Have realistic expectations and prepare for possible relationship issues. It can be helpful to have some communication and emotion regulation strategies ready. Remember, the big picture is that you only need to survive a short time with the family during the festive season.
- Even the best made plans may need to be ditched last minute due to illness or accidents. Whilst stressful, unforeseen events often teach us and our kids valuable life lessons, even creating a great story down the track.



7. Consider mental health and wellbeing

- Whilst it may be a tradition to go on an annual family holiday or attend a family Christmas dinner, maybe your teenager is too depressed or your child with ADHD will be labelled by judgemental relatives. Consider whether it's essential when it may impact mental health and wellbeing for you or your child, especially if dynamics have been extra triggering and challenging this year.

8. Don't forget self-care

- Look after yourself and take time out to relax, even if it's half an hour to have a cuppa, read a book or go for a walk. Five-minute mindfulness breaks using an app like Smiling Mind can be hugely beneficial for managing stress and mental health over time. Be mindful that happy and relaxed parents make for happy children.
- Having compassion when we or our kids make a mistake can really support coping, as can a gratitude practice. On Christmas Eve or Day, ask each family member to name something they are grateful for this year.

9. Reflect and create space for joy

- Try to be present and to enjoy some moments (rather than every moment) this Christmas and school holidays. What brings you joy at Christmas? Create the space to find moments of joy in the lead up and on the day. Mindfulness strategies can help with this, such as noticing the sights, sounds, smells and other sensory delights of Christmas.



10. Holiday connections help us the rest of the year

- School holidays provide opportunities to connect with and get to know our kids better. Use the school holidays to spend one-on-one time with each family member. Holidays away from home are a chance to decompress, do less, rest, enjoy nature and create memories with our kids.
- Parent Line can also provide phone support throughout the holiday period. Our counsellors are here for you seven days a week, 9am to 9pm on weekdays, and 4pm to 9pm on weekends (we are closed on public holidays).