



Surviving Christmas

by Rodney Owen

A Guide for Parents

Christmas is a time for celebration, for peace and most, importantly, for family togetherness. For me the best Christmas memories I have are filled with family, sharing joy, excitement and good times. Recently these memories have become even more valuable to me considering I have lost both my parents in the last 2 years.

Unfortunately, for a lot of families, Christmas is also a time of stress, anxiety, hostility and loneliness. In the rush to make everything perfect we lose sight of what Christmas means to us and what we need to make it truly fulfilling. It is that pursuit of materialistic perfection that causes the stress, anxiety and bad memories that last a lifetime.

In order to survive the stress that comes with Christmas and create the types of memories that will bring pleasure in years to come, there's three things you should keep in mind.

Manage expectations

I know you want everything to be special and have everything go well at Christmas. That's fine, but understand the difference between go well and perfect. Too many people aim for perfect and the truth is nothing ever goes 100% to plan. If we aim for perfection, too often we are disappointed when something doesn't work out. You need to be flexible enough for Murphy's Law. Work out what you need for Christmas to be special; family and or friends, some good food, some thoughtful gifts, whatever is special for you, and focus making the day special, not perfect.

Set a budget

Most of the stress surrounding Christmas comes from the large amounts of money we spend. Setting a budget and knowing how much you have available to spend and on what to spend it will help you to keep track of your spending keeping the financial stress at a minimum. Also, try to avoid spending on credit cards, they may help you buy everything now, but when you throw in the minimum monthly payments and interest rates, Christmas stress can last well into the new year.

Limit your alcohol intake

Drinking is a big tradition at Christmas time, especially in Australia. While having a drink is all part of the fun and festivities of Christmas, excessive drinking leads to more dramas and headaches, and not just the next morning. Alcohol is a depressant which means it makes stress, depression and loneliness worse. Also, when you have had too much to drink, you can lose control of your behaviour. So many people have started fights or done something embarrassing while drunk. Limiting your alcohol intake will help to keep you in control emotionally and physically and help you stay clear headed.



Rodney Owen is a Counsellor and Founder of Bloke Support, an organisation which provides Counselling and Support to men, families and couples dealing with issues such as relationships, anger, depression, stress management and work life. www.blokesupport.com.au