

Emotional Wellbeing during the Festive Period

Often dubbed “the happiest time of the year”, the holiday period is adorned with sparkle, shine, and a smile. But for some, this saying strays a little from the truth. Every year, the festive season throws up stressors that most of us would rather avoid.

Financial stress, family issues, loneliness and more are particularly compounded during this time of the year. And these emotional stressors can really ruin what is supposed to be a happy time. Despite the onslaught of added pressures and negative emotions that can come with the festive season, there's a variety of measures you can implement to protect your mental health.

COPING WITH FAMILY CONFLICTS

The saying goes, “You can choose your friends, but you can't choose your family”. If your family is more reminiscent of the McCallisters from Home Alone or the Griswolds from National Lampoons, you can take comfort in the fact that you're not alone. But if you're worried about conflict this December, here are some ideas:

- If certain family members have been bickering or arguing throughout the year, their conflict is not going to vanish because of the holidays. Be mindful and don't set high expectations... and perhaps sit them at the opposite ends of the table!
- Avoid triggers. For example, avoid discussing divisive matters like politics or past arguments. If these discussions begin, use distractions to change the subject. Also, remember that it's healthy to agree to disagree.
- Get everyone involved in activities after the meal, such as playing sports or watching old family movies. Providing diversions allows people to take a break from each other.
- If possible, have a relaxation room with a bed/lounge and soft music playing - a space to chill out or have a nap.

REMEMBERING LOVED ONES

The emotional impact of missing loved ones who have passed away or are ill is difficult. You may miss this person deeply and wish you were able to spend more time together — especially

during this time of year.

- Share your emotions and talk about your feelings with family and friends. Sometimes sharing happy stories and memories can assist you with getting through the pain of missing loved ones.
- Set aside some time for yourself to reflect on your loss, to recall memories of your loved one, and to look at photos or videos of the person you are missing. Rekindling these memories can help you to feel closer to your loved ones when they are not with you.

LONELINESS

While the holiday period is synonymous with bringing people together, some people will remain separated and be estranged from their families for various reasons. For other people, they may not have any family. Feeling alone during this time of year doesn't have to be an awful event.

- Embrace solitude. It's a great time to reconnect with yourself. Make time to cook your favourite foods and create a list of your favourite movies to watch during the period. But above all, show yourself some love.
- Turn to others. If someone invites you to their family Christmas lunch, don't feel uncomfortable — accept the kind gesture. You could also volunteer for the homeless, foster some puppies/kittens, or even join an online forum and organise a group picnic or BBQ.

If family concerns or loneliness are causing you stress, remember that you can talk to a Converge expert. You can reach our counsellors any time by calling **1300 687 327**. You can also learn more about Converge's support services by visiting: www.convergeinternational.com.au



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