Looking After Yourself at Christmas

"I've found the way of having a happier Christmas is doing what's right for me. Making careful choices about who I spend my time with and keeping in mind that it's just one day. The interactions I have with people throughout the year are just as important."

Christmas is a time of year that often puts extra pressure on us, and can affect our wellbeing in lots of different ways. If Christmas is a hard time for you, **you are not alone**. But there are things you can try that might help:

Plan Ahead

Think ahead about what might be difficult, and if there's anything you could do that would help you cope. Think about whether you really need to do things if you're not looking forward to them. Don't be afraid to cancel plans if you're not up to it.

If you're worried about feeling lonely, think about some activities that might pass the time, like spending time in nature or relaxing. Perhaps plan something nice to look forward to after Christmas.

"Christmas can be a very busy time of year. If you need a break, don't feel bad about taking one."

Be Gentle, Generous and Patient With Yourself

It's ok to prioritise what's best for YOU, even if others don't seem to understand. Think about what you need and how you might be able to get it. Talk to people you trust about what would help you cope.

Look After Yourself

Let yourself experience your own feelings. Even if they don't match what other people are feeling, they are no less valid or real. Take time out for yourself when you need to. Watch a film, read a book, go for a walk.

Spending a day hanging out in your pyjamas is fine, it's great! But make sure you're not too house-bound and spending all day eating and drinking. A brisk walk is a nice way to spend an afternoon, or maybe a day trip somewhere.

If you can't avoid something difficult, plan something for yourself afterwards. It might help reduce the stress.

Why not give the most important person – yourself - a present for Christmas.

"I make myself up a self-care stocking for Christmas. Being kind to myself. Filled with things that make me feel good."

Talk To People

Connecting with others is one of the best ways to protect your mental wellbeing, friends, family or even online communities can help you connect with others who have similar experiences. If you are struggling, let people know. When you keep your feelings to yourself, it can often feel like it's just you – when it's not. You don't have to justify your feelings to anyone nor do you need their permission to look after yourself.

Don't Believe the Hype

Don't compare yourself and your Christmas with the 'perfect' Christmas moments on social media or adverts. Most people only share the good bits and you don't know what goes on behind the scenes. Don't get sucked into measuring your experience against something that isn't real.

HELP AND SUPPORT IS OUT THERE

If you are struggling with your mental wellbeing; talking helps.

Helplines:
- **Samaritans** (24hrs): 116 123
- **Breathing Space** (Mon – Thurs 6pm – 2am, Fri 6pm – Mon 6am): 0800 83 85 87
- **NHS 24** (out of hours): 111
- **Childline** (for Children/Young People): 0800 111
- **Hopeline UK** (For Young People: 0800 068 4141

For tips on looking after your mental health and wellbeing:
- https://clearyourhead.scot
- https://nhsinform.scot
- www.lanarkshiremindmatters.scot.nhs.uk
- https://elament.org.uk