



Surviving the Family Christmas!



As wonderful as the Christmas season is, it is natural for families to feel some stress or anxieties. Adverts for gifts, must have toys and a festive banquetthe reality is that Christmas can be a time of financial worry, relationship stress and hard work.

These tips may make preparations a little easier and will hopefully allow *everyone* to enjoy the season:

- Plan a budget – and stick to it. Children don't HAVE to find the latest toy in their Christmas stocking. Agree a list of 'reasonable' requests and strictly limit your spending.
- The same principal applies to food; the extra trimmings and indulgences are not necessary – and often wasted. Set aside time to plan menus for the Christmas period and include some reasonably priced quick and easy meals too.
- Children often find Christmas a *really* challenging time; they hype, the excitement, late nights..... no wonder they get irritable and argumentative. They are just tired, overstimulated, overdosed on screen time and out of routine. Try to plan some quiet time for them – and the rest of the family. Wrap up warm, go for a walk, stomp in the mud or take a trip to the park. A little gentle exercise and fresh air will work wonders.
- Monitor alcohol intake and alternate each glass of festive spirit with a soft drink or water – over indulgence can lead to conflict and arguments.
- Plan family visits, dates and times well in advance, especially if you are part of a blended family or step parents are involved.
- Separated parents may be experiencing Christmas on their own – and children may have two or more 'Christmas Days'. Plan ahead, seek support from friends or volunteer at a local project rather than spend the day alone.
- Christmas is a time for 'giving' - perhaps attend a local Church service or visit the Food Bank and get your family involved in helping others. Look out for neighbours who may be on their own.