

Practicing Mindfulness Over Christmas

Although Christmas is a great time for celebration, the holidays can be frantic, pressurised and stressful. You can easily find yourself running around trying to get the shopping done, worrying about money or frantically organising a party.

This kind of pressure, on top of an already busy life, can lead to increased anxiety and stress. If you're feeling the pressure, here are some ways you can practice mindfulness to help you have a calmer Christmas.

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

Mindfulness, or mindful living, is achieving a state of mind where you appreciate life and the things we value.

It's about:

- Taking the time to consider and value your experience and the essence of your Christmas.
- Understanding the traditions and their meaning.
- Recognising relationships and the food on your plate.
- Appreciating everything around you to their fullest potential.

Doing these things can develop a habit in your brain to think more positively, ultimately aiding your ability to handle stressful situations.

PRACTICING MINDFULNESS OVER CHRISTMAS

1. Savour each bite

Do you feel overwhelmed at the thought of Christmas lunch, parties and the festive events that this time of year brings?

Mindful eating is the non-judgmental awareness of the physical and emotional sensations associated with eating. It's also described as deliberately paying attention to the eating experience, which, during the holiday frenzy and all its distractions, is easier said than done.

Try to:

- Taste each bite of food and notice the balance between sour/sweet/bitter and acid in your meal.
- Enjoy what you're eating.
- Appreciate how it was prepared and the work it took to produce it.
- Take smaller bites and slow down your eating.
- Engage in conversation and enjoy the social interaction.

2. Make giving mindful

When you write your Christmas cards this year, take the time to include a few words that express the reasons why you love or appreciate the recipient. Thank people for what they have done, and show gratitude for any kindness.

You can also write a card for yourself, listing all the good things that you are experiencing in your life. You don't need to post this one of course, but keep it somewhere obvious, and read it when you need a reminder about what is important.

FIND OUT MORE

3. Make time for breaks & prioritise

December is often jam packed with Christmas events, rushing from one place to another -, BBQ's, parties, playdates — you name it! Many of these are often sparked by saying: "We must catch up before Christmas!"

Create a more meaningful holiday by focusing on what matters most and prioritise yourself and your family.

Declutter your holiday schedule by:

- Asking your family what they love most about the holidays and what their 'must haves' are. Centre the celebrations and your holiday leave around this.
- Writing down everything you hate to do during the holidays and see if you can avoid these this year.
- Delegating a task that you don't enjoy to someone that does.
- Making time in your calendar for some 'you time', whether that's watching your favourite sport or going for a walk.

You have more freedom to choose than you think. You can create your own traditions and memories that are meaningful to you.

4. Channel your inner calm

Find some time to sit and think about what is good in your life right now. Sit comfortably and focus on your breathing.

Try applying a mindful approach to the Christmas tasks that can cause stress and anxiety. For example, when you are Christmas shopping, and standing in a queue, focus on standing tall, and breathing slowly and deeply. Accept that it's okay to feel frustrated in the queue. Try to realise you are annoyed, and then look around you to appreciate the present moment and that everyone is in the same boat

5 THINGS YOU CAN PRACTICE FOR A MORE MEANINGFUL CHRISTMAS

1. Do less. Whenever people get together, it's connectedness that matters most, not an overly ambitious menu.
2. Watch how much you're drinking. Alcohol can lift people's spirits, but only in small amounts. Too much and old resentments can re-emerge.
3. Check your expectations. Not just of other people, but also of yourself. Are they unreasonable? Sometimes we set ourselves up for disappointment by expecting the impossible.
4. Focus on what's going well right now. Or what's most uplifting. Forget the rest.
5. Give thanks. Be lavish in your gratitude that there are people in your life to care about. They are imperfect, of course. Isn't everyone? Give thanks, too, that you and yours have somewhere safe to sleep at night and food to share.

So have yourself a mindful little Christmas and enjoy your festive period to the full!



— FIND OUT MORE

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