



Have a Stress Free Christmas!

For many people, Christmas means stress. It involves battling it out in the shops to max the credit card, entertaining friends and relatives, getting stuck in worsening traffic, and of course acting out the excitement of receiving another pair of socks!

By now the buzz of Christmas has begun. The shops are busy and the social calendar is filling up. The following are some tips to reduce (or if your well prepared - avoid) the stressors of Christmas.

1. Know your spending limit. Extravagant gifts won't guarantee a Happy Christmas. The recipient might feel guilty instead of elated, especially if the gift isn't really wanted. Even children will be grateful for moderately priced gifts that are chosen with care. Consider starting a Chris Kindle (or Pollyanna) with your friends and relatives. This reduces the number of presents that need to be bought.
2. Make a list, and like Santa - check it twice! Remaining organised avoids any oversights or last-minute panic and you'll be less likely to make any impulse purchases that you can't really afford.
3. Don't drink too much! It may ruin Christmas for you and everyone else. Too much alcohol will only add to your stress. You may say or do things that you'll later regret, and you're bound to feel ropey the following day. Avoid having a drink until all your shopping (on the list!) is ticked off - don't be a victim to the Christmas Eve temptations - having no presents or food the next day will do nothing for your popularity.
4. Delegate - Let all members of the family share the responsibility. Chores such as decorating the house, preparing the Christmas dinner and washing up should be shared.
5. If your Christmas involves travelling - plan your trip well and give yourself plenty of time to get there. Whether you're on the road or in the airport, remember everyone else is in the same predicament. Slow down, relax, and try to be courteous to the driver or fellow traveller around you. Remember never ever drink and drive.
6. Have realistic expectations. No Christmas has ever gone perfectly. Spills and squabbles and unwanted gifts are a part of what makes Christmas. Don't hold yourself or anyone else to an unrealistic standard. Just take it all in, relax, have fun, and remember Christmas only comes around once a year.
7. Pace yourself throughout Christmas and by the time Christmas Eve comes along give yourself permission to say 'what isn't done now, won't get done'. Believe these words and relax!
8. Christmas can be an emotional time for some. If you've lost relatives or friends, or have family abroad, try to think about the happy times together. They may not be with you physically, but the memories are always there, so use them well.
9. Buy, don't bake. There are lots of food items available that cut down on preparation and cooking times.



- 10.** Cut down on cleaning. Focus cleaning attention on kitchen and other seen rooms; you can focus on other areas of the house until the hustle and bustle has abated (remember the traditional spring clean).