



Tips For Coping At Christmas

When family and friends get together over Christmas our usual boundaries and coping mechanisms can go out of the window. If you are affected by a loved one's substance use this Christmas, take a look at our tips and advice.







Tips:

- Avoid isolation. It can be tempting to pull away and isolate at this time of the year due to the ongoing stigma of substance use, but surrounding yourself with people who make you feel happy will make it easier to manage.
- When it comes to spending time with people, you decide what works best for you, listen to how you are feeling.




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- Remind yourself of self-care over additional responsibilities or activities. Observe how something is making you feel and know your limits. Your needs are important too. Take time out for yourself.
 - Support your loved one at this time around their substance use but remember that their recovery and the responsibility is down to them.



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- If gatherings have traditionally involved drinking, then talk to your loved one and think together if the focus can be changed if needed. Remind yourself that it's their recovery journey and you are on your own journey which might mean you need different things.
 - Boundaries are more important than ever at holiday times. If a loved one is using substances in a way that is impacting negatively on you, then involving them in plans can be a complex issue.



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- When considering the reaction of not involving someone in family plans, it is the needs and emotional safety of other family members, particularly children, that's a priority. If you choose to invite your loved one, then firm boundaries and expectations for everyone are best thought about, and communicated, in advance.
 - It is important to follow through with any consequences. If your loved one chooses to stay away then this may be necessary. Demanding that they attend could only add to a difficult situation.



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- Have a support plan in place this Christmas. For more information about where you can get help visit:
<https://adfam.org.uk/christmas>
 - You can find Adfam's support forum, videos, and links to local support services here:
<https://adfam.org.uk/help-for-families/finding-support/>






Conflict at Christmas:

Why can conflict happen?

- Disagreements can arise in families with a substance user due to everyone wanting different things from one another e.g. money, time, support.
- Other family members may feel “cheated” of time with you, they may feel frustration, anger, resentment etc. towards the user.



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- Cost of living pressures can put a strain on things. Are you compromising your financial situation due to wanting to please everyone?
 - We can feel pressured to live up to the media portrayal of a perfect Christmas. We can feel upset if it doesn't meet our expectations.
 - Intoxication: people can become intoxicated even if they are not dealing with an alcohol issue.






Conflict at Christmas:

Think about these things:

- What are the triggers? Does the conflict have to start? Are there any fixed patterns to how conflict happens? What are the roles that people adopt in the family? What benefit do they get from adopting these roles?
- What is my responsibility in this? This is the bit you can change.



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- Christmas is an emotive time of year for many different reasons. Decide how you would like your Christmas to look. Manage your expectations in the festive period and be kind to yourself.
 - [Visit our website](#) for more support and information.

