

Press Release

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Our Top Ten Stress Tips to Help You Get Through Christmas in One Piece!

When people think about the festive season, they imagine warm, cosy nights in, eating lots of delicious food, and enjoying time with family and friends. For many, though, December is an extremely stressful time for lots of reasons.

The shops are crowded, the weather is often miserable, there's a ticking clock in the run-up to Christmas to do a lot of things, and shorter daylight hours and longer darker nights can make us feel as though we're constantly running just to keep up with demands placed upon us.

This year's financial challenges will certainly add to the stress of the festive season for many. The pressure to meet family expectations to create a special and memorable Christmas - all on a reduced budget - will be testing, to say the least. And that's before the credit card bills arrive in the New Year.

Carole Spiers is Chair of the International Stress Management Association (ISMA^{UK}), the leading professional body for workplace and personal stress management, supporting good mental health, wellbeing and performance. She says, *'Because there are often conflicting pressures during the festive season, it's unsurprising that worrying about Christmas can adversely affect our health. To help combat stress at this time of year, ISMA^{UK} suggests approaching the holiday period as an opportunity for creativity - a time to slow down, step away from the rush, and embrace moments of quiet. It's in these quieter times that our minds have space to be creative - so take that walk and enjoy the calm. And don't forget to reach out to someone who might be feeling lonely - a phone call can brighten their day and bring a smile to their face.'*

ISMA^{UK} offer Ten Tips to help combat stress during the festive season:

1. **Plan Ahead:** Separate preparation - shopping, cooking etc - into small chunks. Doing this can make Christmas feel enjoyable, instead of overwhelming.
2. **Stay Within Budget:** Gifts don't have to be pricey to be meaningful. Choose a budget that feels comfortable and remember - a heartfelt gesture often means more than a big price tag.
3. **Shop at Quiet Times:** If crowds drain you, try shopping off-peak or online. Shift your focus to the joy of giving rather than to the challenges of shopping.
4. **Reach Out:** Take the opportunity to reach out to those who may feel isolated or overlooked. Visit elderly relatives, reconnect with friends, or volunteer for a cause: this can bring pleasure to others - and to you.
5. **Enjoy Simple Pleasures:** Frost on the windows, a cosy fireplace, or a winter walk in the park remind us of the season's beauty. Embrace these grounding moments, which cost nothing.
6. **Focus on Your Joy:** It's easy to feel like everyone else is having a perfect holiday, not you! Remember, social media often shows only the highlights. Create your own meaningful moments.
7. **Spread Kindness:** Small gestures - a warm smile, a heartfelt 'thank you', or helping someone with a task - can go a long way. A few kind words can uplift you and those around you.

8. **Prioritise Exercise:** With festive treats around every corner, it's easy to skip. So, fit in a brisk walk or some light stretching - these can help balance indulgences and clear your mind.
9. **Set Aside 'Me Time':** Take time to recharge, even in the busy season. Whether it's 10 minutes' quiet reflection, a warm bath, or reading a book, self-care is essential for staying calm and present.
10. **Say 'No':** Holidays can mean lots of invitations, events, and requests. It's okay to say no. Prioritise what brings you joy and remember it's your holiday too!

Notes for Editors

- For interviews and comment, please contact Carole Spiers FISMA, FPSA, MIHPE, Chair, ISMA^{UK} on 077688 78910 or email her at chair@isma.org.uk.
- As a registered charity and membership-based organisation for 50 years in 2024, ISMA^{UK} exists to promote sound knowledge and best practice in stress management, both nationally and internationally, providing advice to a wide range of individuals, businesses and voluntary organisations, while supporting the Health & Safety Executive in delivering their requirements for Stress Risk Assessment.
- ISMA^{UK} have a range of downloadable free stress relief resources which can be used in support of actions to reduce stress and enhance wellbeing and performance at work or at home. They can also be used as handouts by trainers. They are available [here](https://www.isma.org.uk) on their website www.isma.org.uk.