



Registered charity number SC043640

## **Celebrating Christmas**

We all recognise big family and social occasions are times

**Who or what can help?**

**Open and trusting family relationships, empathetic friends to share your thoughts and anxieties.....**

**Look at what makes you feel more at ease, any aspects you may enjoy about the festive season. Discuss these with a friend or family member you feel comfortable with.**

**Some suggestions are:**

**candlelight children's excitement getting together walks in the snow  
smiling as the older folks nod off decorating the house  
coal fires and good books giving/receiving gifts fir trees/holly berries  
clear frosty nights/starry skies walking the dog taking photos Watchnight service  
cheesy Christmas movies pantomime Christmas music and carols**

**Everyone has their own particular favourites.**

**What makes you anxious?**

**people looking at me/what I'm eating How will I cope? What will others think? the sheer amount of food Will they think I'm ungrateful? everyone in a perpetual frenzy going "round the houses" deciding what to wear shopping being alone when everyone else is out there having fun**

**Christmas Dinner**

**Set meal or buffet? What is helpful for you? It may be helpful if you can talk about what is planned beforehand with a family member or friend. Perhaps options such as boiled potatoes and some steamed vegetables could be included. Perhaps the amount of food actually on the table could be reduced in general.**

**Try to focus on why you are all gathered together. If you find it difficult, try to focus on what it means to others, perhaps an older family member who lives alone, a brother or sister who lives and works abroad.**

**If there are young children there, try to absorb some of their excitement.**

**Think about the time involved, at most, one afternoon. It will pass, and if you do manage to share your anxieties with someone beforehand, it will seem a little less daunting.**



Friends and family can help by having Christmas food in stages with some non-food activities in between, a brisk walk together, some present giving and receiving, some games. We don't normally prepare so much to have in one go! Families can opt out of this!

We all have a choice...perhaps the whole family could agree to reduce focus on food, to give the money saved to a charity, or simply pay for a family day out, or a family treat....any family activity, even, very importantly spending time chatting and nurturing relationships. If you prefer to spend time with friends, you could talk about planning the day in a similar way. Can you share your concerns with one person who can mediate with others on your behalf?

If this thought is too awful...how can you proceed?

Try to make arrangements to meet up away from peoples' homes, a woodland walk, an art gallery.... Visiting at home between meals can be difficult as you can be offered lots of snacks...Try to distract yourself, by choosing to do things you enjoy, when you can, relaxation, be in the company of people and or animals you want to be with. Animals have a great knack of making you feel better. If you don't have your own, you could visit an animal sanctuary, stables or zoo, even just walking past fields of farm animals can lighten your step. Read...what makes you feel better? What inspires you?

Try to distract yourself...anything to take your mind off food.

Remember, it's okay to say no, you do have a choice, whether it's avoiding the occasional together, or just saying no to some or all of the food.

You may feel all eyes are watching what you put in your mouth. Nothing could be further from the truth as there is always so much going on at the dinner table/drinks party. Although most people see when Uncle X has had one or two drinks too many, or Cousin Y is a tad too flirty!

You could offer to help the host clear the table, amuse the youngsters, let the dog out, in order to get yourself some space.

Arrange to spend the time somewhere less triggering, or spend it with someone you feel more comfortable with.

Get some fresh air and exercise, or time alone if you need it.

It would be perfectly acceptable to put recovery targets "on hold" for the festive period, to relieve pressure.

If the pressure to binge becomes great because the opportunity to do so is there with all the food around-how do you work through this? .....Eat regular healthy meals/snacks and try not to let yourself get too hungry (depends very much on stage of recovery) but it can reduce the likelihood of a binge.

If the worst happens, remember, "it will pass" and the season will soon be over....

Some thoughts on the subject.....



"Today's hassles are tomorrow's history." Grainne

"Very soon it will be Spring, and I for one, after all the activity, try to focus on the arrival of the first snowdrops...then a big sigh of relief!"

Heather

"My own tactic, as an anorexic, was to think, whatever happens, can be "sorted out" afterwards.... It was a comfort to think things would soon be under my own control again. It helped me cope with "having to be seen to be eating", not wanting to offend or reject hospitality from those I love. Sometimes, just letting it all out, having a good cry somewhere you feel safe, helps when it all gets too much." Carol

The social/family pressures may bring things to a (painful, but possibly helpful) head and provide the opportunity to share and start on the road to recovery.....

"I used to find that the more I feared losing control of my eating, the more likely it was to happen.... So focussing on the outcome you want, is better."

Carol

For Carers

Recognise that big social occasions can be particularly difficult times and resist making comments about food.

Discuss potential scenarios with sufferers to avoid sudden panic, chaos or simply misunderstanding.

Try to place the emphasis on relationships not food.

Try to re-educate other family members!

Try to be as normal as possible, caring without smothering.

Take time out yourself, when things get a bit hot in the kitchen/dining room and try to relax.