

the therapy room

Tools for Emotional & Psychological Wellbeing over Christmas

Christmas is a time for families, a time for partying, a time for having fun, and for the religious among us it is also a very spiritual time.

However, all of these positive and enjoyable aspects, can also bring many stressful and emotional issues to the forefront, and in

paradox can also be the most distressing and depressing time of the year for many people.

This feature tackles some of the core areas that can cause people concern over the festive season, and provides some useful tools and tips from your local counsellors.

I approached three counsellors from differing schools of thought, and asked them what they felt was a driving cause of distress over Christmas, based on their experience within their profession.

Perfectionism

By Camilla Ghazala – CSN (Counselling Solutions Network)

Striving for perfection is one of the most destructive goals we can have, and a quick way into depression. If we are affected by perfectionism – Christmas time can become an un-surmountable mountain as we aim for; the perfect Christmas Dinner, the perfect look and clothes for any parties we attend, the perfect present for our children/friends, and – hey, wouldn't we just love a perfect family to sit around the table for Christmas Dinner!

We may all define perfection differently; perfect, 100%, utopia, the best it/we can, unobtainable...

We are all unique in our perception so our concepts will differ. If we hold the belief of perfection being 100% as credible, we will spend a lot of time and energy trying to get there, so giving ourselves the message that we are not good enough; we are dissatisfied with where we are currently; no enjoyment for now. If we hit our goal we then cannot rest easy for long because we know how impossible it is to stay there – again giving ourselves the message that we are not ok and taking away any pleasure of the current moment.

Human perfection is resting on the understanding that 80% is good and 20% is

good enough. Apply this formula and notice how much pressure it removes from yourself and your life – those around you may be very relieved!

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How We Look By Marjorie – Humanistic Counsellor

In this season of parties with its emphasis on how we look, it can be particularly difficult for those who are less than confident about their appearance, and how they come across to others.

I experience clients who, when asked to look in the mirror and tell me who they see, often describe someone totally different to the person I am looking at. We all have many hidden qualities and attributes, but tend to focus on the negative, and in some cases are completely unaware of our positive qualities.

What is needed is a strategy which

enables us to look at ourselves in a different more positive way. Different people have different routes to a more positive self image, but all of us need help to recognise those qualities within us ourselves

that are obvious to others but not to us! This is where counselling can help, by reflecting images and aspects that we do not see in ourselves, back to us, so that we can believe what others see.

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Christmas can turn out to be the most desolate period for many

By Emma – Emhart Counselling

There are few things in life more awful than feeling empty and alone at Christmas. The relentless pressure to be jolly, to feel happy and be surrounded by people, leaves many people feeling isolated and miserable at this time of year.

So what do you do? No matter how low you feel and how lonely you are, there are always things that you can do to change your situation and the way you feel. Even though it may not feel like it, you always have choices.

Your Inner Core of Steel: Firstly, your Inner Core of Steel. We all have one, and it gets us through the worst situations. It's the part of us that copes, no matter what. Sometimes we lose touch with it, but it's still there.

Think happy: Secondly, remember that feelings follow behaviour. That is, when you behave in a certain way, particular feelings will result. For instance, if you smile, even a

forced smile, it has a chemical effect on your brain and will make you feel happier. What could you do differently to create happier feelings? If you're alone and would like company, if you don't know anyone to join, volunteer to help others at one of the many centres set up for the homeless at Christmas. Think of this as an investment in your own well-being as well as a generous contribution to others who might be feeling as bad as or worse than you do.

Generous spirits:

The third thing to remember is that other people care. There are many kind and generous people, who are waiting out there to offer friendship, interest and company. Hotels

One exercise that has proved beneficial is to keep a log book of positives gained (no matter how small that may seem to us), to refer back to on black days.

are great places to meet people at Christmas. If you can afford to go to a small hotel, which is celebrating Christmas, you will always find other people there, who are also alone at this time of year and are happy to share it with you.

If you can't face going out then call a helpline. You don't have to be suicidal or desperate to talk to the Samaritans - 24-hour helpline: 0845 790 9090. You'll find a friendly, compassionate voice at the other end, and can talk for as long as you want to.



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