

We are here to support you, phone or email us today for support.

"I have come to believe that caring for myself is not self indulgent. Caring for myself is an act of survival." - Audre Lorde

Recovery is worth it because YOU are worth it. Your life is invaluable and you are precious.

Keep challenging the eating disorder so you can live the life you deserve, free from the illness.

Recovery, Hope, Freedom

Managing Christmas



Recovery, Hope, Freedom

Christmas can be a joyous occasion for many people, it can also be a very stressful occasion for many people. For someone struggling with an eating disorder or someone trying to care for someone with an eating disorder it can be a very triggering, stressful and overwhelming time of the year. This leaflet was created to provide some tips on how to manage the occasion while minimising the effects of an eating disorder. We hope you find it useful.

For Those Struggling With an Eating Disorder

- Acknowledge that there will be times over the Christmas period whereby you may feel stressed and overwhelmed – and that is ok.
- Be kind to yourself when you are feeling overwhelmed. Try not to give yourself something else to beat yourself up over with.
- It is ok to nourish yourself and enjoy it.
- Remind yourself that your level of worth is not associated with the food you eat. You are not 'bad' for eating desert and you are not 'good' for eating vegetables. Try and remove the destructive rules.
- Try and think of positive strategies that you can use when you start to feel overwhelmed;
 - ✓ Talk to someone you trust about how you are feeling?
 - ✓ Remove yourself from the situation and take time out for yourself?
 - ✓ What has helped you manage before?
 - ✓ Can you write your feelings down to help get them out?
 - ✓ Just Breathe
- Menu planning – think about coming up with a menu plan beforehand that fits around usual Christmas meals. Can a dietician/eating disorder practitioner help with this? This may help to alleviate the chaotic feeling that often accompanies this period.
- Can you share this menu plan with someone so as to help you challenge the eating disorder thoughts that will not want you to look after yourself?
- Try and stick to the menu plan and not avoid meals. Food is a normal part of any day; it is more than ok to nourish yourself. Can you think of food as medicine that you need to take to stay well? If there is a wobble, be kind to yourself, recovery is difficult and wobbles do happen.
- Christmas is not all about food – try not to let it become the focus.
- Try and be mindful that fixating on food, weight and shape takes you away from enjoying the moment.
- Be mindful of unhelpful eating disorder thinking. Challenge the eating disorder always.

For Those Supporting Someone With an Eating Disorder

- Acknowledge that there will most likely be stress for both you and your loved one. That is ok. Living with an eating disorder is stressful.
- Recognise that Christmas can be a very overwhelming time for someone with an eating disorder. Try and understand the high level of anxiety that may be going on for them.
- Ask your loved one how you can help them prepare in the run up and during the festive period.
- Ask your loved one how they are feeling.
- Let them know you are there for them and that it is ok if they are feeling anxious.
- If your loved one has been given an agreed menu plan from the eating disorder team, try and help them stick to it. Ask them how you can help.
- Try not to make comments on what they have eaten or not eaten – this will more than likely turn into a power struggle and it is putting the focus where the focus does not lie. Try and move the conversation beyond food.
- Try and refrain from unhelpful comments and encourage other family members to do the same– ie weight /shape/appearance based comments, diet talk, negative body talk. The phrase '*you look well*' may come from a positive place but this comment in particular can be very triggering for someone with an eating disorder as they are inclined to interpret it as '*I look fat*' '*I've gained weight*'. It can also be very difficult for someone with an eating disorder to listen to the constant 'diet talk' that occurs around and after Christmas – '*new year, new diet*', '*I am going on a diet after Christmas*'. Be mindful of this.
- After meals can be very overwhelming for your loved one, can you do something with them to help distract them – general talking, watching a film, playing a game? Try and find what works for you and your family.
- **Look after your mental and physical health and wellbeing. This is very important.**



You will never speak to anyone more than you speak to yourself in your head. Be kind to yourself.