



Looking after yourself over the festive period

The festive period is approaching and it's tempting to assume that all will be joy and happiness. For many, this time of year can be difficult, and cause some of us to feel isolated and alone.

Expectations and pressure put on us can drain energy and ramp up stress levels, taking its toll on our mental health.

If you're experiencing health issues, relationship difficulties, grief or other life events, feeling 'festive' at this time of year can seem unrealistic. Below are some tips and ideas to help support your body and mind into the new year.

Keep check on finances

Try not to overspend on credit cards - starting the New Year in debt will only add to your stress load. It can be extremely tempting to borrow money to pay for Christmas costs, but do so with caution. You need to ensure that the repayments won't leave you in difficulty when the festive period is over.

Be realistic on your spending and set a budget to help you stay on track. The charity Money Helper have included some [advice here](#) on spending carefully at this time of year.

Keep active

Exercise will not only help to relieve any stress, but also help to support your mental wellbeing. Below are a few ideas you could try:

- Fit a brisk walk or jog into your routine, such as on your lunch break or after work. If you live near a park, make the most of spending time in nature.
- Exercise with others or join a club, this can be useful if you struggle with motivation and is a great way to socialise with others.
- Use a gadget or app to track progress and set yourself goals, such as a winter step challenge.
- There are plenty of activities you can do in the comfort of your own home. The NHS have provided some free exercise videos [here](#).

No matter how much or little exercise you do, remember every effort counts!

Eat healthy

Try to have a **filling, high fibre/protein breakfast** to kickstart your energy levels – porridge, wholegrain toast and scrambled eggs are all great options. Keep the **healthy snacks** going throughout the day – fruit, low-fat dips with breadsticks and unsalted nuts – and above all, stay hydrated with healthy, non-alcoholic fluids.

Stay on top of the drinking

For many, Christmas and alcohol go hand in hand – but at the same time, over-indulgence can really drain your energy levels. Spritzers and shandy are easy, discreet alternatives to wine and beer.

Alternate your alcoholic drinks with soft drinks such as fruit juice – and **choose lower-strength varieties**.

Stay connected

Don't forget to check-in with others such as friends, family and neighbours, especially if you know people that may be feeling lonely or isolated.

Support your colleagues at work and take the time to ask how they are doing. It's worth highlighting that our jobs can give us structure and a sense of achievement, which is good for our mental health. Volunteering is another way to meet people and do something positive for others and yourself.

If you do struggle at this time of year, try to let people know, and stay connected with others – whether virtually or in person. The charity Mind have an [online community](#) which offers a safe space to talk to others. You can also call the charity [Samaritans](#) on **116 123** any time for emotional support. For further advice on low mood, find NHS guidance [here](#).