

**Festive
Times,
Mixed
Feelings:
A Guide to
Managing
Celebrations**



Festive periods and major celebrations—like Christmas, birthdays, weddings, or cultural holidays—can be joyful for some but deeply challenging for others. Here’s a breakdown of the potential pitfalls and some practical strategies to help avoid emotional and financial strain:

<u>Financial Pitfalls</u> ▪ Overspending on gifts, food, travel, and decorations ▪ Pressure to match others’ spending habits. ▪ Using credit cards or loans to fund celebrations ▪ Impulse buying due to emotional triggers or sales	<u>How to avoid it:</u> ✓ Set a realistic budget and stick to it. ✓ Use a gift list with spending limits per person. ✓ Consider DIY gifts or experiences over material items. ✓ Plan ahead to avoid last-minute expensive purchases. ✓ Be honest with loved ones about financial boundaries. ✓ Look around charity shops, markets and car boot sales for new items that are unwanted and inexpensive. ✓ If you are potentially buying for a large group of friends or family suggest a secret gift with a limit. ✓ Suggest a time to get together and make something together or share a meal instead of doing gifts.
<u>Family & Relationship Strains</u> ▪ Unrealistic expectations of harmony or perfection ▪ Old conflicts resurfacing ▪ Grief or absence of loved ones ▪ Feeling obligated to attend stressful gatherings	<u>How to avoid it:</u> ✓ Set healthy boundaries around time and energy. ✓ Allow yourself to opt out of events that feel harmful. ✓ Create new traditions that feel meaningful to you. ✓ Reach out to support networks or professionals if needed. ✓ Decline respectfully – “Thank you so much for the invitation—it really means a lot to be included. I’ve been feeling a bit low lately and not quite up for a celebration, so I’m going to sit this one out.” Or “I hope it’s a wonderful gathering and that everyone has a lovely time. Please do keep me in the loop for future get-togethers—I’d love to join when I’m feeling more myself.”

<u>Loneliness & Isolation</u> ✚ Feeling left out due to lack of family, friends, or invitations ✚ Social media comparisons amplifying loneliness. ✚ Missing someone due to bereavement or distance	<u>How to avoid it:</u> ✓ Volunteer or join community events—giving back can be healing. ✓ Connect with others in similar situations (support groups, online communities). ✓ Plan something special for yourself—self-care is valid celebration. ✓ Talk openly about how you are feeling with someone you trust.
<u>Gift-Giving Pressure</u> ✚ Feeling obligated to give expensive or numerous gifts ✚ Comparing your gifts to others' ✚ Guilt over not being able to afford gifts	<u>How to avoid it:</u> ✓ Shift focus from material gifts to meaningful gestures. ✓ Suggest Secret Gift giving or group gifting to reduce costs. ✓ Write heartfelt notes or offer acts of kindness instead. ✓ Offer to do a job for someone you know they do not like doing – e.g. ironing in exchange for something you do not like doing.
<u>Grief & Loss</u> ✚ Holidays can intensify feelings of loss or absence. ✚ Traditions may feel empty or painful without loved ones	<u>How to avoid it:</u> ✓ Honor the memory of loved ones in a way that feels right (e.g., lighting a candle, sharing stories). ✓ Allow yourself to feel and express grief—do not suppress it. ✓ Seek support from grief counsellors or peer support groups.

<u>Mental Health Triggers</u>	How to avoid it:
✚ Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) ✚ Anxiety from social obligations ✚ Depression due to unmet expectations or isolation	✓ Maintain routines that support your mental health. ✓ Limit alcohol and sugar, which can affect mood. ✓ Practice mindfulness, journaling, or gentle movement. ✓ Reach out for professional help if needed.

General Tips for Organising Major Celebrations Without the Lows:

- ✓ Plan early to avoid stress and overspending.
 - ✓ Communicate openly with those involved—set expectations.
 - ✓ Keep it simple celebrations do not need to be extravagant.
 - ✓ Include others who may be alone or struggling.
 - ✓ Reflect on what truly matters—connection, kindness, and presence.
- It is important to look after yourself first!

Self-Care Checklist Daily Practices

- ✓ Eat nourishing meals.
- ✓ Stay hydrated.
- ✓ Get fresh air or gentle movement.
- ✓ Take breaks from screens and social media.
- ✓ Practice mindfulness, meditation, or deep breathing.

Emotional Support

- ✓ Talk to someone you trust.
- ✓ Journal your thoughts and feelings.
- ✓ Allow yourself to cry or express emotions.
- ✓ Avoid toxic or draining interactions.
- ✓ Celebrate small wins and moments of peace.

Rest & Recharge

- ✓ Get enough sleep.
- ✓ Schedule quiet time or solitude
- ✓ Say no to things that feel overwhelming.
- ✓ Do something just for you (e.g. read, craft, watch a favourite film).

Joy & Meaning

- ✓ Engage in a hobby or creative activity.
- ✓ Listen to music that lifts your mood.
- ✓ Connect with nature or animals.
- ✓ Give or receive kindness.
- ✓ Reflect on what you are grateful for.

It can help focus your feelings if you write them down, why not try to complete the table below: -

Things I find challenging	Things I enjoy

Check out these websites to help you with the financial constraints.

[Some money tips for Xmas - Money expert](#)
moneysavingexpert.com/banking/Budget-planning

Using the table you have completed with things you find challenging and things you enjoy, why not try to fill a diary sheet out to help you avoid pitfalls and stressful situations. Here is an example of a completed one, there is a blank one for you to complete on the next page.

Top Tips

- Plan to leave the house once a day.
- Try to speak to one person, daily.
- Exercise/move your body.
- Treat yourself to a pleasant thing or experience.

DATE	Something I enjoy doing	Meet or speak with...	Commitments	Must dos
23 rd Dec	Read a book – visit library to get one	Ring Mother	None	Food Shopping New prescription and pick up meds
Xmas Eve	Walk – inc. pint in pub	Meet Friend - Ken	Church with Mother	Cooking
Xmas	Watch DVD - Spiderman	Family gathering	Go to family gathering limit time around dinner	none
Boxing Day	Lie in!	Neighbour – invite for lunch	lunch	Make lunch
27 th Dec	Walk into town and look around shops	Meet Ken in town	none	Food shopping
28 th Dec				
29 th Dec				
30 th Dec				
New Years Eve				
New Years Day				

Date	Something I enjoy	Meet or speak with	Commitments	Must-do's
23 rd December				
Christmas Eve				
Christmas Day				
Boxing Day				
27 th December				
28 th December				
29 th December				
30 th December				
New Year's Day				

Support lines and support information



Disclaimer

We do not endorse or recommend any specific activity, app, group, or service mentioned. Please use your own judgement and seek professional advice if needed.

With **all of us** in mind.

NHS & 24hr 111 Service

GP: You can contact your local GP if you have an urgent care need, have an illness that does not improve with self-treatment, are worried about your health and have an ongoing health condition.

NHS 111: If you can't wait for your usual services to reopen, you can phone NHS 24 on 111 and select the option for mental health services. The team at the NHS 24 Mental Health Hub will help you get the right care in the right place. The service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Call 999 or visit A&E if you have an urgent mental health need. For example, if there is an immediate risk to your life or the life of another, such as from a severe injury or overdose.

Website: <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/mental-health-services/where-to-get-urgent-help-for-mental-health/>

Wakefield Here For You

Are there to support you when you're feeling down or overwhelmed because they recognise that everyone struggles occasionally. Anyone in Wakefield and the surrounding five districts who is 16 years of age or older and feels they need same-night support but does not need medical or specialised care is eligible for their Wakefield program.

Up to six persons can gather in their friendly social space every evening. If you feel comfortable being with other people and are seeking a diversion from your thoughts and emotions, this could be helpful. They provide complimentary refreshments, a variety of games, and just a comfortable place to sit and socialise with people to let you know you're not alone.

One to one support is available in person at one of their safe spaces between 7:30pm-10:30pm. This is helpful if you have something specific on your mind that evening that you want to talk to one of our support workers about.

Telephone number: 07776 962815 (7 days a week 6pm-midnight)

Location: The Workspace, Space Station, 6 Denby Dale Road, Wakefield, WF1 1HR

Wakefield Turning Point Talking Therapies

Free talking therapies are offered by Turning Point to help people build the abilities and self-resources necessary to overcome obstacles. If you are aged 16+ and are registered with a Wakefield or 5 towns GP surgery, you can access NICE recommended therapies at Wakefield Talking Therapies. There is no upper age limit to access their service.

They also provide free workshops that have largely been co-produced but are clinician-led to help you to support your own wellbeing or that of someone you care for.

Telephone number: 01924 234 860, weekdays 8am - 8pm (until 4pm on Fridays), 9am - 4pm on Saturdays and 10am - 4pm on Sundays

Website: <https://talking.turning-point.co.uk/>

SHOUT

Anyone in the UK who needs support can use Shout, a free, private, and round-the-clock text messaging service. Shout Volunteers are available if you need to talk and are having trouble coping. The service provides immediate support for all types of mental health challenges, taking people who are struggling to cope to a place of calm every day of the week.

SMS: Text the word 'Shout' to 85258 to start a conversation with a trained Shout Volunteer. You only need to share what you feel comfortable with and their volunteers will work with you to take your next steps towards feeling better.

Website: <https://giveusashout.org/about-us/about-shout/>

SAMARITANS

A safe space where you can discuss anything that's bothering you at any time and in any way you choose. They will listen to you without passing judgment or giving you instructions.

Telephone: You do not need to have any credit or call allowance on your plan to call 116 123.

Email: jo@samaritans.org

Location:

37-39a Charlotte Street, Wakefield WF1 1UL

Website: <https://www.samaritans.org/>

Extra Support

Visit our website for further resources and information:

<https://www.wakefieldrecoverycollege.nhs.uk/resources/>

With all of us in mind.