

**Food and the Festive Season**

Throughout the festive period, there is a big focus on food. When you're struggling with disordered eating, this can be very challenging to manage.

**HERE ARE SOME TIPS THAT MIGHT HELP YOU COPE:**

- Signals**  
You could establish a signal with a loved one to use when you're struggling and might need to take a break.
- Planning ahead**  
For meals like Christmas dinner you could sit down with a family member and plan out portion sizes, what's going to be on the plate and what to expect.
- Communication**  
Expressing to a loved one or friend that situations involving food this Christmas might be especially difficult for you.
- Plan for after a meal**  
It can be challenging to think of ways to distract yourself when you're overwhelmed with thoughts of food. It might be a good idea to plan in advance an activity, like watching a film or playing monopoly to distract yourself after meal times.

**New year, new me?**

There is a lot of toxic media coverage at this time of year about improving yourself, changing your behaviour and becoming a better person. When you're struggling to even get out of bed in the morning this can seem very overwhelming and become an ultimately unhelpful narrative.

**WHY IS THE 'NEW YEAR NEW ME' PHRASE PROBLEMATIC?**

- It encourages people to put unrealistic expectations on themselves and others.
- It implies that who you are now is not good enough.
- It can be very unhelpful to put pressure on ourselves to change as it often results in failure or burnout.

**COPING WITH THE PRESSURE AND EXPECTATIONS**

- It is ok to not set resolutions but if you wanted to, it might be better to set 'goals' instead. This can help to look at things in a more positive way.
- Make your goals self-care related. For example if you find reading relaxing you could say 'I am going to read 10 pages every day'.
- It's ok to not stick to your goals. Everyone needs time to adjust to change, rest and recharge.

Looking back on the year can also be very difficult especially if you are not where you want to be. It might feel as though you haven't achieved anything. But it is important to acknowledge even the tiniest bit of progress you have made and be proud of yourself for making it as far as you have.

# COPING WITH THE FESTIVE SEASON

**Why might you find the festive period difficult?**

- There is a lot of pressure to be social
- Your usual routines may be disrupted
- You may feel overlooked if you celebrate other religious holidays that get less attention
- You might not have access to your usual support systems
- You might be feeling worried about the future
- If you have lost someone it can be hard to experience this without them
- Your Christmas might not look like other people's or like it does in the media
- Mental illness doesn't go away over the holidays
- The pressure to make positive changes in the New Year can be overwhelming

**What tools and ideas could you use to cope?**

- Don't put pressure on yourself**  
Take a break from situations you find difficult. Be kind to yourself for making the effort to spend time in them.
- Keep to a routine**  
This could include trying to wake up and go to bed at the same time as well as scheduling in an activity you really enjoy and spending some time exercising every day.
- Reach out**  
Try reaching out to one of the services on this board. If you feel able to, you could also talk to a friend or loved one about how and why you might find this time of year challenging. This might help them understand how they can support you.
- Spend time with people who understand**  
It can be really helpful to see friends and family who you enjoy spending time with. This could be as simple as a facetime or going for a walk.
- Try distractions**  
When you're feeling overwhelmed try to focus on something else like sensory toys, music, drawing, watching a Christmas movie or playing a board game.

**Accessing Support**

Here are some of the helplines and support services you can access over the festive season.

- You can call the Samaritans helpline at 116 123  
**SAMARITANS**
- Text the word 'Shout' to 85258 for 24/7 support in a crisis  
**shout 85258**
- The Sussex mental health line is available 24/7 on 0800 030 9500  
**NHS**  
**Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust**
- Visit this link for information about further services available over the festive season!
- Listen to the Podcast mini-series on Christmas created by CAMHS clinicians and Experts by Experience  
**Beat Eating disorder**
- You can ring the Beat helpline for support with eating disorders on 0808 801 0677 between 4pm and midnight over Christmas and the New Year

