

# Struggling at Christmas: Family Difficulties



Christmas is a holiday that sees people gathering together to celebrate the festive season. At Christmas we are expected to spend time with the ones we love the most, but what about the times when our experiences don't match up with what we see of other's celebrations? We may also wonder just how much will Covid-19 impact the holiday period?

There are many reasons why you might not be feeling the Christmas spirit this year: it could be worries about Covid, struggles with loneliness, social anxiety, family difficulties or dealing with the loss of a loved one.

These issues can be particularly hard to talk about this time of year, as it may feel like everyone would rather try and enjoy the festivities than listen to someone's problems. This is why it's so important to know you're not alone in any hard times you're experiencing.

If you ever feel you don't know who to talk to over the festive season, Kooth is open on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and Boxing Day with our team of counsellors available for you to talk to. Sometimes it can help just to know you're not alone in what you're feeling!

Feeling low at Christmas isn't always about the social element of the holidays. The mainstay of Christmas is being surrounded by your family, and not everyone has a positive experience with this.

## Family Difficulties

It might seem a bit of an understatement to say each person's family dynamic is unique, but it's a crucial thing to remember at Christmas when the most idealised model of family life is presented across all different media.

In a perfect world every young person is surrounded by a supportive loving family, but unfortunately that's not always the case. Part of what can make Christmas so hard to deal with for many is a difficult or distressing home life.

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There are no simple solutions for these situations, and Christmas may feel like a painful reminder of everything that a person doesn't have with their family.

A counsellor from the **Counselling Directory** has suggested these four tactics for coping with a tough home life:

- **Be kind to yourself:** It's ok to have sad, angry or disappointed feelings about Christmas and what it brings up for you.
- **Look after yourself:** If you are old enough to drink, be mindful of your alcohol consumption. Also try your best to eat some healthy food, and focus on getting enough sleep, sunlight and exercise.
- **Watch your triggers:** Think about what may feel difficult for you from your experiences with family and devise ways to manage your response.
- **Remember you're not alone:** It may look like others are having a great time, but many are coping with difficulties of their own; what you see is not always the whole story.

Of course, your home life doesn't have to be distressing to find your family a bit too much over the holidays!

On the Kooth magazine we also have a light guide on how to survive family over the Christmas season, and we'll look at ways to manage any changes to this year's festivities from lockdown restrictions.

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