

YOUR FESTIVE GUIDE TO SELF-CARE

Worried about the preparation for Christmas taken its toll on your wellbeing

Given what a year 2020 has been, Christmas maybe a little different to previous years, but with all the extra demands on your time and energy, taking care of yourself is still a necessity. Here are some self-care tips to help you stay calm and collected.

SLOWER MORNING

Mornings can often be a rush and even more so in the run up to Christmas. You may find yourself spinning from one thing to another or trying to do several things at the same time.

Slowing down isn't easy. You tell yourself you can't – there's so much to do. Slowing down takes effort and practice but if you can slow down in the morning you will start the day feeling calm and able to think clearly. Even when you know that self-care is important it can be hard to make it happen; make it a normal part of your life.

DO IT: If you are constantly rushing it's because you're trying to fit too much in. Plan a new morning routine - decide what is important for the day and only do what really needs to be done in the morning. If you do less you can do those things completely and with more focus.

A successful mindfulness technique will help you to be more aware of your thoughts and actions - simply slow yourself down by 25%. Take your time move slowly and make your actions deliberate, not rushed.

SAY NO

Having the ability to say no goes a long way in creating balance and calm. Choosing whether to do something also increases your confidence, as the mind likes to know it has a choice.

Think of how much extra time and peace you can create for yourself if you opt to say no to extra demands on your time and energy, such as that last minute request for homemade bread for the local fair, which you know will just add pressure to your busy schedule.

DO IT: Saying no can feel difficult at first. Start by practicing on yourself. For example, you could say no to looking at your phone before breakfast.

When you choose to say no to another person, say it gently but firmly with a brief reason - then stop talking. Your pause will allow them to hear and receive your message. If they question it, kindly and considerately repeat your initial response. They will understand.





STAY IN THE MOMENT

It's so easy for your mind to step out of the present moment - to reminisce of Christmases past or to rush ahead into preparing the festive schedule. Staying in the present moment means you can be there for yourself and your loved ones.

One of the best ways to get stressed is to think constantly about the future instead of simply taking time to be here and now, we mistakenly think that trying to think up every scenario and potential outcome is the key to having a relaxing day. Whereas in truth, whenever we are fully present, we find ourselves enjoying whatever we are up to.

DO IT: This moment in time is all that really exist. When you catch your mind thinking about the past or worrying about the future bring your thoughts back to the here and now; take a mental note of what you see and hear.

Worrying doesn't help you get more organised, instead develop the clarity of a clear mind to help you know exactly what to do and when to do it.

CHOOSE SIMPLICITY

Nothing is less efficient than perfectionism. Trying to perfect every little detail will drain you of energy and time, leaving you less zest for enjoying yourself.

DO IT: Choose to simplify your Christmas. Reduce your to do list to focus on fewer things and therefore, free up your time - and headspace - to relax a little. Do you have time to decorate the lounge mid-December before the family arrives? Ask yourself do I really need to do this, or am I being a perfectionist?

Self-care isn't just about doing the right thing; it's about making changes to fit your life. You just need to choose one or two things at a time and focus on them. Then move onto the next thing.

AND BREATHE...

A simple breathing practice takes just a couple of minutes and is like a miniature meditation to reset your mind and relax your body. It also helps to reduce stress and anxiety, and increase energy levels and improve sleep. The way you breathe affects just about every function in your body, including the digestive, nervous and immune system. By learning how to use your breath as a tool, you can quickly improve your physical and mental health, emotional wellbeing and overall performance.

DO IT: One example is a simple breathing exercise called coherence breathing, which shifts your body into a calming response known as 'rest and digest'.

Inhale through your nose for six seconds. Exhale through your nose for six seconds. Repeat this cycle for three minutes, although there's no limit as to how long you can go. If six seconds feels like a struggle, reduce it to five or four seconds, and get comfortable at that rate first. Then gradually build up.