

Richmond Wellbeing's Hearing Voices Network WA

A Guide to Enjoying Christmas Time

Regardless of religion or faith Christmas is not only the season for giving to others, but also a time to be kind to ourselves. All the more important for those of us who experience voice hearing or other distress around our mental health.

Whilst all the preparations can be exciting and fun they can also be a catalyst for stress and triggers. We can however go a long way to avoiding these triggers if we plan ahead and employ a few well thought out practices in the lead up to the festivities. We have compiled a guide to enjoying the holiday season. Implementing even a few of these tips can make for a much more enjoyable Christmas season and New Year.

1. **Try to stop worrying about others expectations** and needs and put our own first. Minimize exposure to stressful situations like visiting family and friends or too much time spent Christmas shopping. We can feel the need for everything to be perfect on Christmas Day - the presents, the visits and the meal, but in reality that's pressure we put on ourselves needlessly. In the big scheme of things if we let someone down on a visit, even at the last minute, or the meal isn't cooked just right no one is going to remember except us. Don't feel that you need to appear to be the copier if you're not. We are real and shouldn't be ashamed to show our vulnerabilities when we need to.
2. **Choose which relatives and friends to visit.** While we don't like to disappoint any of them, we often find that they are in the same situation with little time and too much to do and are quite relieved to have some extra spare time to themselves. Don't be afraid to tell people you are having a quiet Christmas and stick to your guns, people can be very persuasive and try to convince you that you can fit in a visit, this will just increase stress levels as you try to please everyone. If you feel that you can't excuse yourselves from these commitments due to family and children's pleas, ensure that you make at least a little time for yourself to do something you enjoy and that you find relaxing, even if it's staying in bed for half the day, doing some art or exercise.
3. **Plan ahead**, do online shopping or start shopping early (if not for this year you could begin early for next Christmas). Even shopping for groceries becomes more stressful due to large crowds more noise and a sense of urgency. Tempers become frayed as more people become impatient with each other. Make good use of the home delivery services that the supermarkets provide, both Woolworths and Coles offer this service and their websites are listed below:

Woolworths: <https://goo.gl/M5pdiZ>

Coles: <https://goo.gl/p8f0Rr>

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4. **Keep Christmas shopping simple.** Trying to find just the right gift can be a struggle, make good use of gift cards which are readily available in supermarkets and the individual retailers. Always try to budget ahead, there is nothing worse than overspending and finding that you are penniless in the New Year. It's a good idea to create a separate Christmas account and only put in a certain amount of money to be spent on presents and stick to that amount - it's very tempting to make use of credit cards at this time of year which can create unnecessary financial stress.
 5. **Find a social or community event.** For some the fun festive season is not their reality and can be quite the opposite, leaving them feeling alone and isolated as everyone around seems to be surrounded by family and friends. Many of us will be spending Christmas by ourselves without support and its times like this when things can become overwhelming. If you know that you are going to be alone at this time and feel this will be detrimental, now is a good time to plan ahead and find out if there are any supports or events that you might be interested in attending. Below is listed some links for events in Perth that welcome all comers and provide an opportunity to share a meal and warm conversation.

Freeway Church Thrive Christmas Party

<http://freewaychurch.com.au/thrive-christmas-party/>

Mission Australia Christmas Lunch in the Park

<http://www.christmaslunchinthepark.com.au/donate-now/>

Freeway Church Christmas Day Community Lunch - **Bookings essential**

<http://freewaychurch.com.au/christmaslunch/>

Joondalup Christmas Lunch

<http://www.joondalupchristmaslunch.com/index.php/about/>

The City at Christmas – several events by City of Perth

<http://www.experienceperth.com/events?DetailsView=true&EventItem=7a23fe0e-2e77-42db-bc20-0d4d28f309a9>

Manna services for the homeless and vulnerable - <http://manna.org.au/>

Manna is closed on Christmas day due to the Mission Australia Christmas Lunch in the Park (see link above)

6. **Know you are not alone.** Often people feel the pain of separation due to divorce, violence, work circumstances homelessness dysfunctional families, lifestyle choices or other reasons. This can be harder to bear at Christmas time. We can find ourselves with feelings of anxiety and depression and maybe having no social support or “happy family” to go to, which can also increase mental health issues. However, know that you are not alone and many others are struggling too. This is the reality for many.

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7. **This is a good time to reach out** for the support of others if you can. Although it can be quite daunting, try contacting family or friends and letting them know that this is a particularly difficult time for you. If you feel able, try to find a way that you can be of service to others, many organizations hold big events for those who find themselves alone or struggling at Christmas and are very grateful for people volunteering their time. It also ensures that you will be surrounded by others in a cheerful event. Do not feel guilty or pressured if this would be too stressful for you, and consider attending as a guest rather than a volunteer.

 8. **Have a happy holiday, not a hectic Christmas.** What would you be doing on any given Friday? There are 52 of them in the year. This one will pass as they all do and you can put as much or as little emphasis and meaning on to it as you feel ok with.
Another approach is to do something completely un-Christmas like, an activity completely left field which takes the spotlight away from the traditions and ceremony that can be so stressful.

In Summary anything that feels ok for you IS ok. Self-care is paramount and you deserve it.

Wishing you all a safe happy and peaceful Christmas and New Year.

HVNWA Support Contact List

The Hearing Voices Network of WA is NOT a crisis support service.

HVNWA is a program of Richmond Wellbeing. Office Hours are Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm, phone on 9350 8800.

We are closed weekends and all Public Holidays (Office closed between Christmas & New Year)

Please note, HVNWA staff and volunteers work part time. If no one is available, please leave a message and we will get back to you as soon as we can. Please call on 9350 8800 or email us at hvnwa@rw.org.au

For immediate assistance, all hours:

Ambulance/ Police/ Fire - 000

Police Assistance- Non Urgent – 131444

Kids Helpline - 1800 551800

Lifeline – 13 11 14

Men's Line Australia – 1300 789 978

Healthdirect Australia – 1800 022 222 (24 Hour medical advice)

Alcohol & Drug Information Service – 9442 5000

Samaritan Crisis Line – 9381 5555

For confidential mental health emergency assessment, support and referral services:

Mental Health Emergency Response Line

(Metro) 1300 555 788

(Peel) Free call 1800 822676

For urgent medical care, you can also visit your nearest Public Hospital Emergency Department:

Armadale-Kelmscott Memorial Hospital

3056 Albany Highway, Mount Nasura WA 6112 Tel: (08) 9391 2000

Fremantle Hospital and Health Service

South Terrace (Near Alma St), Fremantle WA 6160 Tel: (08) 9431 3333





Fiona Stanley Hospital

11 Robin Warren Drive, Murdoch WA 6150 Tel (08) 61524013

Joondalup Health Campus

Cnr. Grand Boulevard & Shenton Ave, Joondalup WA 6027 Tel: (08) 9400 9400

Rockingham General Hospital

Elanora Drive, Coo loongup WA 6168 Tel: (08) 9599 4000

Royal Perth Hospital

Wellington Street, Perth WA 6000 Tel: (08) 9224 2244

Sir Charles Gardiner Hospital

Hospital Avenue, Nedlands WA 6009 Tel: (08) 9346 3333

St John of God Hospital Midland

1 Clayton Street, Midland, WA 6056 (08) 9462 4000

St John of God Hospital Murdoch

100 Murdoch Drive, Murdoch WA 6150 Tel: (08) 9366 1111