



## Press Release

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### **Peace and Goodwill or stress and anxiety this Christmas? Tips for coping with that Christmas Stress**

There are many reasons why people can find Christmas a particularly stressful time of year. 'Tis the season to be jolly but often for people who are experiencing employment or financial problems, difficult family relationships, or health problems Christmas just brings with it additional pressures.

Unmanaged stress can be a factor of high blood pressure, headaches, gastrointestinal problems, lack of appetite, forgetfulness, sleep disturbance and lack of concentration. It can also make you irritable which interferes with the spirit of the season.

Sandwell Mental Health and Social Care Foundation Trust's Primary Care Liaison Team provides help to people experiencing mild to moderate mental health problems like anxiety, stress and depression. The service also provides initial assessment and interventions.

Lance Brown, Oldbury/Smethwick PCT Co-ordinator says: "The festive season can be a difficult time for people, particularly for those who have a mental health problem. Issues like loneliness and difficult relationships are highlighted when all around seem to be having fun. Even the thought of Christmas shopping or writing and sending cards can put people under additional pressure they can do without'.

He continued, 'To help people cope with the stresses and strains of the festive season we have pulled together a list of stress busting tips'.

If you start to experience symptoms of anxiety and stress such as headaches, panic, fatigue, sleeping problems, irritability and difficulty concentrating below is a list of things that you can try to help ease the anxiety and stress being experienced. It is important to remember that if these self-help techniques don't that you should see your G.P. for further advice and support.

- Tackle one thing at a time. Make a list of the things that need to be done to get ready for Christmas and decide which is the most important. Do that one thing and only then move onto the next task
- Keep things in perspective. Remind yourself of all the good things and the things that are really important to you. This will help to stop the stressful, negative chatter in your head.
- Take time out for yourself. Just 15 or 20 minutes a day is all it takes to unwind. Deep breathing, picking up a book or magazine, going for a short walk or listening to music are all excellent ways to help reinvigorate yourself.
- Talk about your stress and anxieties. The old saying 'a problem shared is a problem halved' really can be true. Talking to someone you trust about your anxieties can help you to realise what is important and get to the root of the real issues that might be causing your problems.
- Don't pile on the pressure. Although it can be hard, learn to say "no" and recognise that you can't do everything.
- Remember that you can't please all of the people all of the time and it really isn't your responsibility to make everyone happy for Christmas.
- If you are alone this Christmas or feel isolated, consider getting involved in community activities or volunteer so that you can have contact with people.

Christmas comes but once a year, maintaining good mental health and wellbeing is important all year long.

Further information can be obtained by visiting [www.smhft.nhs.uk](http://www.smhft.nhs.uk) or taking the Mental Health Foundation online stress reduction course at [www.bemindful.co.uk](http://www.bemindful.co.uk).

**ENDS**

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**NOTES FOR EDITORS:**

**Sandwell Mental Health and Social Care NHS Foundation Trust (SMHFT)** is the major provider of mental health and specialist health learning disabilities services to people of all ages in Sandwell.