Christmas can be one of the most stressful events of the year. This can be due to the expense of buying gifts, the pressure of last minute shopping and the expectations that when families come together it will be a happy time.

• Even though it can seem that you or your family are the only ones finding Christmas stressful, it can help to remember that you are not alone in how you feel
• Make lists of all the things you have to do. It can help to de-clutter your mind
• Ask people in advance for their help – it can reduce some of the pressure on you
• Try to resolve any family issues before everyone gets together. It may take some planning, however it can help to make the day more bearable
• If you are unable to resolve any family issues, plan in advance your coping strategies for dealing with Christmas eg practice some deep breathing, visualise a calm relaxing atmosphere on the day and practice on the days leading up to Christmas day
• Do you have to spend Christmas with your family? Consider planning to do something different eg go out for Christmas dinner, spend it with friends, create a theme and ask people to bring things that support the theme
• Remember that the days between Christmas and New Year are only a few days. Finding a way to endure those couple of days will help it to feel more manageable
• If you have people coming over for food, ask them to bring an item so that all the expense is not on you
• Secret Santa can be a good way to add fun to the day. Put each person’s name in a hat in the weeks leading up to Christmas Day and the name they pick will be who they buy the present for. Set a limit eg £5 per person. This way it can make gifts more creative
• Try to remember that it’s the thought that counts – not the cost. If money is tight, consider being creative. There are many websites that offer suggestions
• If you max out your credit / store card in the run up to Christmas, this can cause money misery in January and can contribute to the January blues. Try as best as you can to be realistic about the presents you buy.
• If you have recently suffered a bereavement or have previously lost someone over the Christmas period, try your best to do something different. It may not take the emotions away, however it can help you to see the Christmas period in a different light

The Think Right Project, run by Mind in Cambridgeshire commenced in May 2011, and is funded by Comic Relief for 3 years. The overall aim of the project is to provide a range of mental health promotion and campaigning activities to combat the stigma and discrimination related to mental health challenges.

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