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## Tips for a stress-free Christmas!

Posted on: 07 December 2010 by **Rhian Mainwaring**

### On the first day of Christmas my true love gave to me... a panic attack



Yep, Christmas isn't always idyllic, in fact very rarely do we all experience the closing scenes of It's *A Wonderful life*. Family commitments, money worries and the added burden of being the hostess with the mostest can culminate in a pretty stressful season, not only this, but often preparations and responsibilities fall solely on one member of the family!

So we've brought together a few tips, some from us and some from Joyce Campbell, a life coach and author of *How To Get Off Your Backside And Live Your Life*, now that's the kind of advice we need! It's all in the planning, and remember, it's your holiday too, so make sure you lay down the law for an enjoyable Christmas!

### Christmas shopping

Some people love Christmas shopping (ME!) others dread it, but hopefully these little tips will help...

- Start early, the longer you have the less stressful it will be, this means no rushing around the shops on Christmas eve and no wrapping until three in the morning. Consider spreading it out over several days, or if you work close to a high street pick up a prezzie everyday and wrap it each evening.
- Set a budget and stick to it. Don't feel compelled to spend more than last year, or equal the amount someone spent on you. None of your family or friends would like to make you bankrupt!
- Be organised. List everyone you need to buy for and split your budget between them sensibly. If your list is longer than Santa's speak to your relatives, should only the kids get presents?
- Duplicate. If you've found a perfect gift then feel free to send it to more than one person especially if they live on other sides of the country!
- Have focus. It's easier to buy presents if you know what people like, they're sizes and their favourite stores. Ask in advance for wish lists and get creative. There may well be things in there you can make or find in a charity shop or vintage fair.

### Christmas expectations

**Joyce Campbell** is a life coach and has provided us with some solutions to common Christmas conundrums.

Dilemma: Christmas parties are one of the benefits of the festive period, catching up with friends and having a good knee's up all comes under the 'it's Christmas' umbrella, but some parties you'd really rather not attend.

- Solution: One of the things I always tell my clients is to prioritise the things that give them pleasure. Let go of some of the 'shoulds' and 'musts' in life! If it's a sit down meal make sure you say no early on, if it's just drinks a phone call beforehand should suffice.
- Sneaky tip: Have an excuse up your sleeve at all times, this means you won't be put on the spot. Dinner with the in-laws is usually a good one!

Dilemma: Your 18 year-old niece is coming to stay for the festivities with her boyfriend. She wants to share a bed with him. Her parents are fine with it, but you're not.

- Solution: Unless you have masses of spare rooms, then people may have to double up anyway, in which case you can just do an airy explanation of how the sleeping arrangements are going to work. If she specifically asks you in advance then be careful you don't sound as if you are criticising her or her parents - a simple 'I know you probably think I'm a bit old fashioned about this, but I really don't feel comfortable about you and XX sleeping together while you are here' is all that's required. If she asks why, you can simply say 'I don't know really, it just makes me feel odd - I guess I'm not ready to see you as having that sort of relationship yet.' However, be sensitive - if you hear creaking floorboards on the stairs at 3am, don't embarrass them by trying to catch them. You've made your point, just let it go.

Dilemma: You get household appliances every year, or gifts you'll never use or didn't want.

- Solution: Get a Christmas list out very early. Doing it via email means you can add specific web links to things you really want.

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- Sneaky tip: By yourself a present, it's Christmas!

Most importantly remember that it's your Christmas too! 99% of the time the things you'll stress out about won't even enter other peoples mind, so don't let a forgotten gift riddle you with guilt. If you find holding up traditions hard work then make new ones, Christmas should be about having fun and being happy (for everyone). Don't be afraid to ask for help, so if you made the dinner you don't do the washing up, if you bought all the presents you don't need to do all the wrapping and if you organised the Christmas party you mostly certainly shouldn't be pouring the drinks!

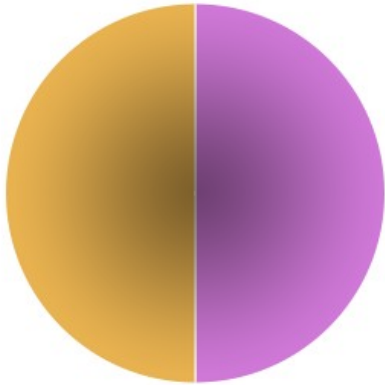
Do you have any other Christmas worries? Got a vegetarian coming for lunch? Check out [my blog](#) on feeding a veggie on Christmas Day.

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**Rhian Mainwaring**

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### What do you find most stressful at Christmas?

There's no denying that despite the fun, Christmas can also be pretty stressful. We'd like to know what pulls your cracker at Christmas...

- **50%** Missing loved ones
- **50%** Work commitments
- **0%** Money worries
- **0%** Family commitments
- **0%** All of the above