

HAPPY HEALTHY HOLIDAYS

Relationships Australia Tasmania Senior Counsellor Mr Steve Barker today reminded the Tasmanian community to look after one another and themselves during the busy festive season.

“We have over 65 years’ experience in supporting Tasmanians and we know that Christmas can often increase any stress or trauma people and their families are experiencing,” Mr Barker said.

“Increased expectations of togetherness and family can bring many issues to the surface. This can be the case both for people with family and friends and for those people who find themselves alone during the festive season.”

A national Relationships Australia survey has recently shown that a third of people feel stressed about trying to balance work responsibilities with Christmas duties and 37 percent feel that spending more time with extended family over Christmas had a damaging impact on relationships.

Relationships Australia suggests ten ways to help ensure a happy and healthy holiday season.

- Don’t get carried away with gift buying and end up with a large credit card bill in January – remember it’s the thought that counts.
- Resist the temptation to overindulge in food or alcohol – your problems will still be there the next day and a hangover or upset stomach will make them feel worse.
- Get up each day to a plan. “Today I will .. (go to the movies, climb a mountain, go for a drive, cut the lawns)
- Seek helpful company. Avoid company that distresses. Free Christmas lunches are available, such as the Colony 47 Community Christmas Lunch in Hobart and the Launceston City Community Christmas Lunch.

- If the holiday period is difficult, try to avoid the emotional triggers. These might include Christmas carols or particular festive venues or events.
- Plan some family activities for before and after lunch to give everyone something to do which is fun.
- Try and steer the conversation away from topics you know will cause conflict or disagreement, such as politics or religion, or make a pact with your family that you won't discuss those issues.
- Practice self-care, including "time out," meditation or deep breathing, walking and exercise.
- Understand that, however lonely and sad the time is, it will pass and there is help available.
- If you are in crisis please call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or in case of medical emergency ring 000.

Mr Barker also reminded the community that extending the helping hand of friendship and festive spirit to those who are alone or less fortunate can be a real source of pleasure.

"This could be as simple as inviting an elderly neighbour to join you for Christmas lunch or donating your time, money or presents to a local charity. Something that can seem relatively minor to you can make a big difference in someone's life."

Relationships Australia Tasmania wishes all Tasmanians a happy and safe Christmas and looks forward to working together towards positive and respectful relationships in the New Year.

For further information, or for comment, please contact

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About RA Tas

Relationships Australia Tasmania (RA Tas) provides counselling, relationship and parenting education seminars and courses, dispute resolution, community support and professional training. Services are available to all people regardless of cultural background, family structure, economic situation, religious beliefs, gender or sexual orientation.

For more information call 1300 364 277 or visit our website: tas.relationships.org.au