

Media Release

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Keep this Christmas stress-free

The holiday season can be a joyous time full of friends and family, but for many people it can be a time of stress and anxiety.

South Western Sydney Local Health District Director of Mental Health, Dr Claire Jones, said the key to a healthy, stress-free Christmas is a casual, low-cost celebration.

“Christmas can be a tough time for people financially and emotionally with pressure from all sides to spend extra money and arrange multiple catch-ups over a short period of time,” she said.

“The cumulative effect of this can lead to depression and anxiety if the demands are not managed.”

Dr Jones said keeping celebrations more casual and involving other people in catering and gift buying could stop people from feeling overwhelmed.

“Encourage friends and family to take part in a Secret Santa and to bring along a plate to gatherings to reduce the pressure and cost of entertaining,” she said.

In the rush of the festive season Dr Jones said it was also important for people to remember to look after themselves properly.

“People need to make sure they are getting plenty of rest and exercise to improve their mental health, and that they are eating well and not over-indulging in seasonal treats,” she said.

“Keep an eye on others and offer support to those who don’t seem to be coping. By reducing everyone’s stress and anxiety levels you can ensure a happy and healthy Christmas.”

Tips for a stress-free Christmas:

- Set a spending limit for gifts and entertaining and stick to it
- Put in place a plan for Christmas so you don’t over-commit yourself
- Organise a Secret Santa in your family or your workplace so everyone only has to buy one present
- Ask guests to each bring a plate to get-togethers to share the cooking load
- Drink alcohol in moderation
- Make sure you get enough sleep
- Exercise regularly to stay fit physically and mentally
- Remember at the end of the day, the most important thing is just to relax and enjoy time with family and friends

For 24 hour telephone crisis support call Lifeline 13 11 14 or visit www.lifeline.org.au.