

COPING AT XMAS

Christmas is a difficult time for some autistic people. Constant change, bright lights, overloading gatherings with family and friends - these are some of the challenges we face. Here are some of our top tips for coping at Christmas.

"If you're anxious about being in a crowded supermarket, avoid going on the 23rd and 24th of December. These dates are when shops are at their busiest before Christmas."

"If you don't like Xmas food but are going to Xmas dinner, notify who's cooking it a few days in advance. This gives them time to prepare and you can have something you like."

"When using public transport at Xmas, leave plenty of time to wait for a bus or train, as delays are quite common at this time of year."

"If you're worried about overload at an Xmas or New Year party, feel free to leave or take time out when it becomes a bit too much. Explain to the host why you're worried first, whether it's about crowds or sensory issues."

"Receiving unexpected gifts can be hard to deal with. If you are a parent, partner, family member or friend, give the autistic person in your life some notice of when they're getting a gift and what it actually is."

"For a party where there is no food, have something to eat before you get there. This will help to keep hunger at bay for a short while."

"If you are thrown off by the change in routine, make a list of dates of when you are going out. Have a weekly calendar handy too, in case you don't know what day it actually is."

"If you're at a family home after Xmas Day and find the decorations overloading, feel free to ask if they can be turned down or taken down altogether. The reason why is because they can trigger sensory overload."

"Only socialise when you feel up to it. You shouldn't feel forced into talking to someone if you don't have the energy to do so."

"Give yourself some space if and when you are feeling overwhelmed. Move to a quiet space or go home if all the Christmassy stuff is too much."

"If you're not a fan of Christmas, try and take the time to explain to family members why. Then, they should understand and make sure you don't feel overwhelmed."

"If you are alone at Xmas, there are helplines you can talk to. Check out our Support At Xmas guide for who to contact during this time."



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