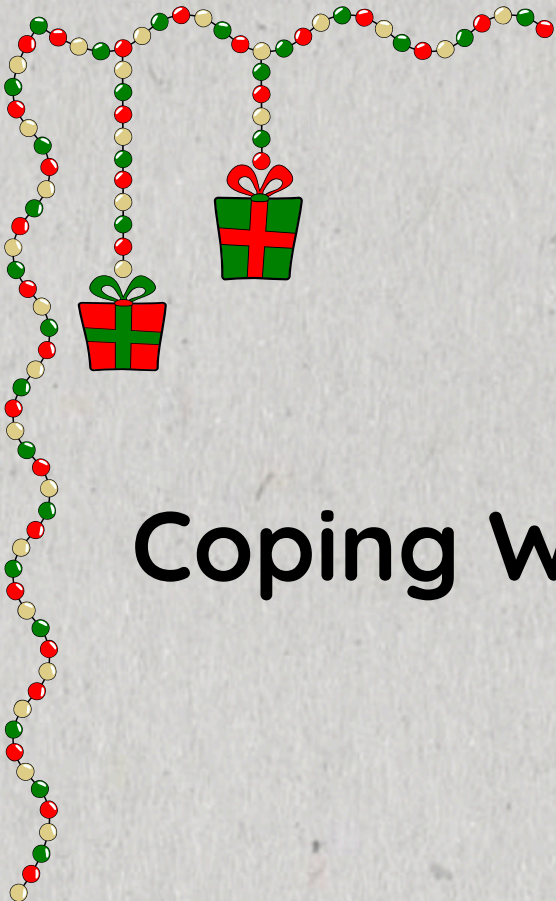




**eating distress**  
north east



# Coping With Christmas Pack





- First of all make sure you are comfy.
- There is a lot of information in the pack so you can read it in your own time and at your own pace; take breaks.
- Personalise the process and use the interactive sections to get the most out of the pack.

## Inside the pack we focus on:

- Recognising pressure and stress
- Ways to prepare
- Strategies to put in place
- How family and friends can help
- Afterwards



## Recognising Pressures and Stressors

Recognising what we're feeling is the first step to dealing with it. It is normal to experience any of the following...

- The Christmas period can feel chaotic. An emphasis on family get togethers and food can be particularly stressful.
- Feeling stressed from the hyperfocus on food, and the pressure to eat foods you would otherwise usually avoid (and possibly with people you would usually avoid).
- Feeling pressure to be part of a 'happy', 'jolly' or 'merry', environment which is driven by the media and social media.





## Recognising Pressures and Stressors

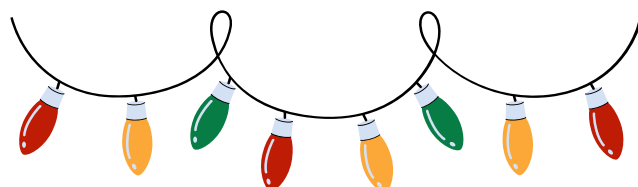
- Wanting everything to go perfectly and that your Eating Distress does not impact on others.
- Worries about how you will cope in certain situations.
- The influx of seeing family and friends can raise anxieties and stress as can the idea of comments around appearance and asking how you are doing.

This list is not exclusive, write down below what part of Christmas you are concerned about the most.

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## Ways to Prepare

- Talk through your concerns with the people you are spending Christmas with. It is OK to state your needs and ensure they are met.
- Create a plan and include what helps you feel secure ie, books, films, music, smells, family members, family pets, seeing friends or visiting local areas.
- Create a safe space where you can take a time out from it all, if it becomes overwhelming.
- Find out plans and workout a routine which you can implement each day. For example, getting up at the same time, going for a walk, reading before bed around the same time, calling a friend, watching an episode of something in the evening.





## Ways to Prepare Continued

- Try not to ponder on any previous negative Christmas experiences and predict it will be the same. Similarly, avoid perfectionism i.e. wanting everything to go how you plan it in your head.
- Thoughts like these can create unnecessary anxiety which is extremely uncomfortable in the present. Don't put yourself through something unnecessarily!
- Share what you are, and are not, comfortable with. For example, offer to help with food preparation if doing so helps provide you with some reassurance.
- Add your own below.

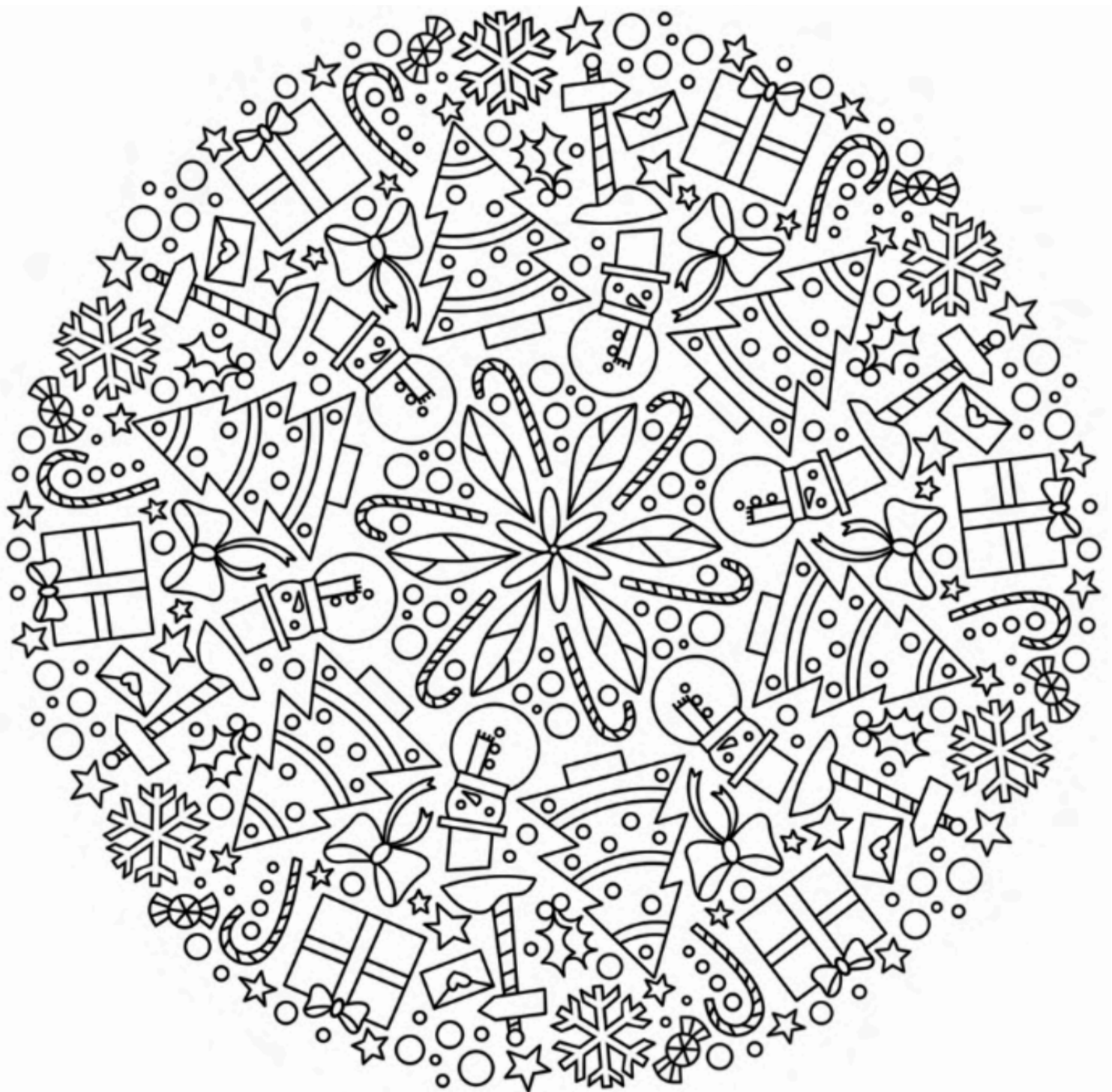
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**Take 5 minutes, put the kettle on and an  
colour in.**





# Strategies To Use During the Festive Period

- Focus on your own traditions e.g., decorating the tree, family walks, carol singing, wrapping presents or watching Christmas films.
- The urge to binge, or to get rid of food eaten, is most likely to come in the hour or so after eating so, it's best to be with others during this time. Focus on the traditions above or other distractions to get you through this time.
- Question adverts which project the, “perfect Christmas”. Advertisements idealise Christmas and are marketing tools trying to sell something.
- Similarly, be aware that people like to project their “perfect Christmas” via social media, when reality often tells another story.
- Keeping a stress ball, or a fidget toy on you can help channel nervous energy







I matter

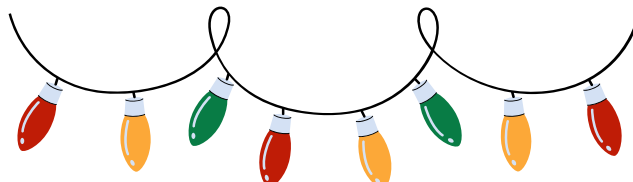
## Strategies Continued

- Breathing techniques to facilitate calm. 3 seconds in...pause...5 seconds out...pause. Keep this going for at least 5 minutes.
- Write down feelings. Articulating how we feel, can enable perspective and context.
- Remember that you can, step OUT of Christmas, if you want to. Getting out of the house, going for a walk, non-Christmas TV or music.
- Prioritise self-care, rest, hydration, fresh air and sleep.
- Try not to isolate yourself. Human (or animal) interaction is key to remaining present. Also, sit next to someone who is supportive.
- Remind yourself that, the Christmas period will end and is only short lived.
- Add your own, below.

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# Helpful Tips for Family and Friends

As a result of the focus on food, eating in social situations and seeing friends and family, Christmas has the potential to be a highly stressful time for your family member experiencing eating distress.

- Christmas may not be the same this year however, your loved one can still engage in traditions which mean it is just as enjoyable.
- Try and limit comments towards your family members' eating habits, food choices, appearance or portion sizes.
- You do not need to plan or create a 'perfect Christmas'.
- Encouraging your family member to eat more, or eat foods they are anxious about, is likely to have an adverse effect.
- For your family member, eating in front of a lot, or unfamiliar people, can be a highly stressful situation.
- Providing the family member with as much control as possible can be beneficial for them to feel at ease.
- Designate time to understand what family member is experiencing. This can be very helpful in settling anxieties around the festive period
- Create a codeword your family member can use to have a time out or so they can talk with you in a busy setting.



## Things to Look Forward To.

It is important to remember that life goes on after Christmas. By planning ahead for the new year, we can shift our focus toward the things we want to do over the next 12 months.

Things I want to achieve.

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Things I am looking forward to.

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Places I want visit.

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People (or animals) I want to spend more time with.

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Things I want to work on and improve.

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