

HEALTH AND BEAUTY



12 steps to a stress free Christmas

It is that festive time of year again and most islanders are looking forward to a relaxing break from work and happy times spent with friends and loved ones. The problems and stresses of daily life seem to be put on hold as the festive season begins.

King Street is full of Christmas cheer with the sound of your favourite carols playing and on display are many glittering and sparkling decorations and fare. Once inside the shops you feel warm and content. This truly is a wonderful time of year.

If we are sensible we can all have a fantastic time, use the quiet time between Christmas and New Year to set ourselves up for 2008, and enjoy the festive season to the full.

Having said all this Christmas is not the same for all of us so let's look at some interesting and disturbing facts from Christmas's past.

FACTS OF CHRISTMAS PAST

- 58% of people overspend at Christmas with debts lasting for at least 12 months.
- 25% of people build up debts which last

36 months.

- 40% of us feel stressed at juggling presents, family and other Christmas commitments.
- 74% of people already overweight put on even more pounds throughout the Christmas period. 33% of us put on at least half a stone during the festive season.
- 21 % of us spend Christmas alone.
- 90% of us go into the New Year without written goals and aspirations in place for the forthcoming year.
- 80% of us go into the New year with good intentions but only 12% of us continue on beyond 15 February with our New Year resolutions in tact.
- 50% of us go into the New Year without enough rest or holiday and feel tired and exhausted as the New Year approaches.
- 41% of us drink so excessively we would still be over the legal driving limit the following day.
- Hospitals report a rise in road accidents up by as much as 12% due to people rushing around buying presents and making last minute arrangements.

This makes a depressing read doesn't it? All of these things are avoidable simply with a little planning, preparation and consideration for our own wellbeing and that of others.

Have fun but always stay in control. Have a plan and stick to it.

HERE ARE OUR TWELVE STEPS TO A FUN FILLED CHRISTMAS

Step 1 - Planning

Allow plenty of time to do your Christmas shopping. Make a list noting what you are planning to buy for each family member or friend. This makes life easier when hitting the shops with the glare of special offers and buy one get one free promotions. Better still try shopping over the internet it is far less stressful, there is no hustle and bustle of crowds and you do not have to rush because your parking ticket is running out.

Step 2 - Finance

Complete a budget plan in advance of the festive season. Allow yourselves enough money to have a really good time, however, once the limit is set don't overspend.

Never borrow money or take out loans to fund Christmas. Live to your means. Having a quiet Christmas with loved ones if you need to, you'll find you'll have just as much fun and without the debt and worry that can follow.

Many of us pay into a Christmas club regularly. It may be too late this year but think about it for next year. Again it can ensure you have all you want at Christmas but you've budgeted for the celebrations throughout the year. Alternatively, set up a separate Christmas account with your bank.

Step 3 - Look at what you have learnt
Christmas and The New Year are great times of reflection. Look back over the year and choose your 5 most prominent key learning experiences. Make sure you write them down and use them going forward. After all what we learn in life is more important than what we achieve.

Step 4 - Do something different
If you are fed up with the same old traditions and habits that the Christmas season brings each year why not break from tradition if you fancy a change. Try a new activity that the island has to offer. Try cooking goose instead of turkey. If you always watch TV after Christmas lunch try playing a board game. If you are feeling brave why not try the Havre des Pas Boxing Day swim. Trying new things gives us a sense of achievement.

Step 5 - Rest and Relaxation
If you are working and are in a demanding role mentally you will need a complete break over Christmas ready to start the New Year on top form. Don't try and work through thinking the work place will be easy at this time of year. Your mind needs a complete break so take at least 1 week off or more if you can. Indulge in some rest and relaxation. Go for walks on the beach. Try and read a good book. If possible try and get away for a few days for a change of scenery.

Step 6 - Support those around you
Help to ensure your partner gets a complete break as well. Christmas can be very busy especially for our partners that are cooking Christmas dinner and putting up family guests and friends. Be mindful of this and offer as much support as you can. Talk to your partner about what you can do to help. Help put on the washing, peel the vegetables, set the table.

Step 7 - Charity begins at home
If you know someone that is going to be alone this Christmas, invite them round. You could invite them round for a drink, Christmas tea or even Christmas dinner. This not only would help make someone else's Christmas special but would give you a sense of purpose and raise your self esteem.

Step 8 - Be Generous
Charities tend to be collecting for the less fortunate during the festive season. Be mindful of this and give where you can to as many as you can After all Christmas is a time for giving. This will also make you feel really good about yourself and once again is great for your own confidence and self esteem. If you are low on funds why not tell your friends via email that you are going to donate money this year instead of sending Christmas cards.

Step 9 - Be safe
When it comes to alcohol always adopt the 12 hour rule if you are driving the next morning. We know 1 pint of beer is equivalent to two units, so technically if you finished drinking at 11pm and had consumed 6 pints of beer, the alcohol would still be in your system for 12 hours until 11am the following day. In this case it wouldn't be safe to drive until well after lunchtime. Remember the police step up their drink and drive focus over the festive season so buddy up with friends or work colleagues to share lifts or use a car back service.

Step 10 - don't over indulge
Ensure you have some control over what you eat and drink over the Christmas period. The art is achieving the correct balance between having fun and enjoying yourself without stacking on too many pounds. The average weight gain over Christmas is 7 pounds. Try to use this as your guide. You don't want to spend the next 6 months making up for it.

There is nothing wrong with having a day of what you fancy but counter balance this the next day by taking some exercise and moderating your calorie intake.

Step 11 - Family Time
The Christmas season is a time when families get together whether they want to or not. Be mindful of the fact that if you have family members staying in your house it is only for a short period of time. If you do not get on with some members of your family allow yourself time out for a

break. On the other hand if you are a guest, offer a helping hand and do not judge those around you. You may do Christmas differently and next year you could always host the day in your home instead.

Step 12 - Out with the old and in with the new
New Year is renowned for new beginnings. This is the time to think long and hard about what you want to achieve both personally and professionally during 2008. Remember a goal is only a wandering thought until it is written down. Ensure you have a minimum of 5 goals for 2008. This will keep you focused and give you the direction you need.

Ensure each goal meets the SMART criteria. Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and has sensible Timeframes put around it.

And remember. Write it down.

Well I hope you managed to take all that in. Christmas is a great time ultimately for feeling good and enjoying ourselves. I hope the above will help you to achieve that and more.

From all staff at the Channel Islands Life Centre and Life Practice Group of companies we wish all readers a very happy and healthy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

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