

MANAGING PRE-CHRISTMAS ANXIETY

It's almost December! As we countdown to Christmas, many people start to get anxious about all that have to be done before the big day! There are ways to manage the anxiety and enjoy these weeks!

Why is it Important to Manage Anxiety at this Time?

- Anxiety can cause behavioural changes – you may become so anxious about fitting everything in that you start feeling overwhelmed, become irritable or avoid things you usually enjoy.
- Anxiety that lasts for weeks can be bad for your health. Hormones such as adrenalin are released during these times which can increase in blood pressure and cause insomnia or poor digestion.

How Can You Avoid Being Overwhelmed?

- At the beginning of December look at all you have to do before Christmas and work out the most important. These may include: family gatherings, buying gifts, preparing food, attending certain parties. Focus on these things, write them on the calendar so you can see how much time you have to prepare for each and where overlaps happen.
- Work out the tasks that you have to do for each one: shopping, cooking, wrapping up gifts (it takes longer than you think!). If it's becoming too much work, delegate some tasks to other family members or use services like grocery delivery.
- Before accepting another invitation or task, check your calendar – will it overlap with something else? Will it mean you're rushed to complete another task?
- Work out a budget – take into account travelling expenses, gift purchases, outings, groceries as well as your usual expenses. Don't be tempted to spend on things not included in your budget!

What about Lifestyle?

- Eat a balanced diet – lots of fresh fruit and vegetables! Balance sweet or rich food with fresh food! And remember breakfast: cereal and fruit or eggs on toast to give you a healthy boost!
- Don't drink too much alcohol. Even one or two extra drinks a day can leave you feeling out of sorts and it may increase your anxiety!
- Drink lots of water! As the weather warms up, it's easy to become dehydrated and this can cause headaches or snappiness! Carry a water bottle with you and sip from it regularly!
- Keep up your exercise routine this helps to burn off some of that adrenalin.
- Get enough sleep – lack of sleep can cause difficulty in concentration, headaches and irritability. If you know you're going to have several late nights in a row, try to sleep longer in the morning or take a nap the afternoon before.

What Else is Important?

- Take time to relax – every day! Relaxation helps to calm your mind, releases muscle tension and regulates your breathing. Meditate, go for a walk or sitting quietly with a book or some music.
- Socialising can be fun and sharing a hug can be very therapeutic – but sometimes constantly being around people can be stressful. Know your limits and take some time alone if you need it.
- Family gatherings can be stressful especially if some people don't get on well – plan to avoid people you clash with and have an exit plan in case you want to leave quickly.

What if this Doesn't help?

- Acupuncture and massage are great for anxiety – it's the gift you can give yourself!
- If anxiety is becoming overwhelming, see a doctor – you may need a referral to a counsellor or medication to help manage your anxiety.