



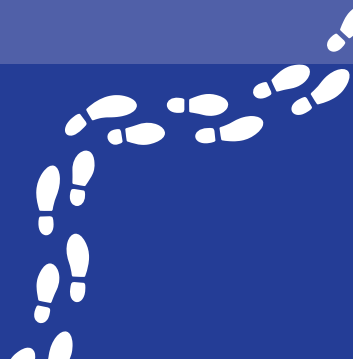
COPING AT CHRISTMAS

Caring for someone with an
eating disorder at Christmas



A person with an eating disorder may start anticipating Christmas weeks in advance. The person may become more rigid in the weeks leading up to Christmas, or the eating disorder behaviours may become worse.

If you notice this happening, this guide may be a useful starting point to help you to think through actionable steps to support a person during this time and to collaborate on ways of reducing anticipation and stress.



COPING AT CHRISTMAS

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**REDUCING
ANXIETY AND FEAR**

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**CREATING A SUPPORTIVE
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**NAVIGATING THE
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**MAINTAINING
STRUCTURE**

**NEED
SUPPORT?**

FIND OUT MORE: WWW.BODYWHYS.IE



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REDUCING ANXIETY AND FEAR



ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR CONCERNS

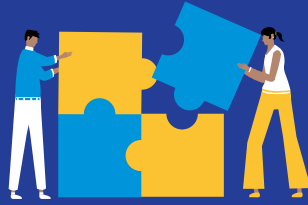


- Let them know that you are aware Christmas might be causing anxiety and that you are available to help them in any way you can.
- Sometimes you can support by helping the person to stay in the 'here and now' in the weeks and days leading up to Christmas.

OPEN A CONVERSATION

- What do they hope their Christmas will be like?
- What are their fears?
- What parts of the day are they most worried about?
- Can you help with any of this?
- What, for you, is important for Christmas and can you meet in the middle?

PLANNING AHEAD



PLANS AND OBLIGATIONS

- Think through plans and obligations for Christmas period
- Discuss this together
- Determine areas where they may need support or to opt out



THINKING IT THROUGH

- By having a conversation about how the day will happen, you are more likely to help reduce anxiety about the day and make it more manageable – and more enjoyable – for everyone!

CREATING A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT



DIET TALK

- Be mindful of diet talk during Christmas and January. Be aware that a person with an eating disorder can find this very difficult to cope with
- If you can, avoid discussing diets and making significant changes to your own eating behaviours.
- Be aware of your language around your own eating and your body.

CREATING A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

Affirmations & open questions

Acknowledge your person's positive behaviours/qualities and ask open questions that encourage your person to share their own ideas.

Active listening & rolling with resistance

To gain a mutual understanding of your person's needs and take a step back when emotions are running high during difficult moments.

Leaning on supports & self-care

It is important that you take care of yourself, by spending time on what brings you joy and/or comfort, so that you can continue to take care of your person. This can be difficult, which is why having supports, such as friends and family members, or Bodywhys Support Services, around you is really helpful.

CREATING A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

Reflecting on experiences

Reflecting on past experiences or situations can be helpful when encountering or preparing for a difficult situation – asking yourself what was helpful for your person and what was not.

Emotion regulation & setting boundaries

Managing your own emotions can in turn help you to keep calm in stressful situations and being consistent in your own behaviours can contribute to a more supportive environment.

BODYWHYS PILAR PROGRAMME

The PiLaR programme is a free four week structured programme, incorporating both psycho-education and support, as well as practical advice and skills to help you support your family member towards recovery.

Email: pilar@bodywhys.ie to find out more



NAVIGATING THE UNEXPECTED

COMMENTS FROM OTHERS

- We can never ensure completely that somebody won't comment on the food, what everyone is eating, or people's appearances. If you can, ask family not to comment!
- It can be helpful to anticipate comments. Consider how you can support the person to cope with this. If you are unsure ask the person what they might find helpful.

BE AN ALLY

- When there are bigger groups gathering, sometimes a person can feel, and anticipate feeling, very overwhelmed and open to panic.
- If they know they have an ally (maybe you or another member of the family) they may feel more comfortable and able to participate more in the day.



MAINTAINING STRUCTURE



STRUCTURED DAYS

- Disrupted routines and increased time together at home can cause distress.
- Having a structure and maintaining a regular eating schedule can be helpful.

FREE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Bodywhys offers a range of leaflets and resources including, but not limited to, the following:

- Eating Disorders - [A Guide for Families](#)
- Eating Disorders - [Speaking to your Doctor](#)
- Eating Disorders - [A Treatment Guide](#)
- [Binge Eating: Breaking the Cycle](#). A self-help guide towards recovery
- [Active Waiting Resources](#) - For those who have started the referral process.

Christmas specific resources:



New Maudsley Carer Skills Podcast
Bringing the New Maudsley Carer Skills to life - in bite size pieces.

Coping at Christmas
with Harriet and Jenny



EATING DISORDERS
Coping with Christmas

Webinar for those supporting a person with an eating disorder around Christmas time.

DATE
FRIDAY 23rd NOVEMBER

TIME
7-9pm online via zoom

Interested? Please email:
info@bodywhys.ie

BODYWHYS
The Eating Disorders Association of Ireland

**NEED
SUPPORT?**

FIND OUT MORE: WWW.BODYWHYS.IE



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AFFIRMATIONS FOR CHRISTMAS

Christmas is just one day,
no matter how it goes, it
does end.

If you look after yourself today,
the future will look after itself.
Remember to put on your own
oxygen mask first.

Even if things don't change to
make it easier for your person
this year, remember that it
won't always be like this.

RECOVERY IS POSSIBLE