



TIPS for expectant and new parents

Taking care of your emotional wellbeing during the holidays

Plan ahead and prepare.

A sense of being organised can really help to avoid overwhelm at this time of year. There is most likely a lot of things that you need to take care of including gift shopping, catch ups, end of the school year, planning holidays and then of course Christmas Day itself. It is common to feel a little overwhelmed and concerned about how you are going to manage it all, and planning ahead can help. Some suggestions for preparing include making a list of what you need to get done and asking for some help from family and friends. If it's going to be a bit of a lonely time, think ahead about who you can spend time with or others who might also be alone and join up with them. Planning ahead can be helpful, but remember to allow for some hiccups and be flexible where you can.

Keep it simple.

It's really easy to get caught up in the frenzy of options at this time of year. The messages that we receive from TV, social media, advertising and every where we turn seem to be telling us that we need to have the biggest and brightest tree, a table styled for Instagram, the perfect family photo and more. It can help to take a step back and remind yourself that sometimes simple is best. The time spent with family making lovely memories is not dependant on how your table looks, or how well you have photographed it all. Christmas can be simply about quiet moments shared with loved ones, a break from routine, the simplicity and beauty of balmy summer nights, and sharing food and laughter.

Learn to say no gracefully.

Saying no politely and setting boundaries are both important skills for taking care of your emotional wellbeing at Christmas time. It's not necessary to attend every event that you are invited to, and it's not rude to set boundaries and limits around what you can and can't fit into your schedule. Take a few minutes each time you receive an invitation to think about how it makes you feel, and whether you think you really want to attend. Learn to let others know that you are grateful for being included however, you are taking good care of yours and your family's wellbeing this Christmas by spending lots of quiet time together (if that's what you need).

Schedule time for yourself.

It's amazing how easy it is to forget your self care practice at this time of year. It's so important to set some time aside regularly to do the things that nurture your own emotional wellbeing. In amongst all of the festivities, be sure to schedule in some time for your self care practice too. Pop it on your list so that you don't forget! We also suggest buying yourself a little gift while you are shopping for everyone else.

Kindness.

Especially at this time of year, kindness matters. The sense of overwhelm and the stress of the holidays can very quickly manifest as crankiness towards others and ourselves. Small acts of kindness can instantly lift your mood and also the mood of others. Smile at the busy shop assistants, take the time to send a kind text to someone you know is struggling, check in on your neighbours or workmates as the holidays approach. If the focus seems to be on material goods then you could consider making a donation to a charity or buying some gifts that support others, there are many worthy causes in need of your support and kindness at this time of year.

Family.

There are often mixed feelings about family gatherings. Think about what and who will work best together. Play games or do activities to take the pressure off conversations and create a bit of fun. Make new traditions, especially as you now have a family of your own. Remember to take a break and plan some time out for yourself. Spend your precious time with your most loved people when you can. If family gatherings are filled with tension keep them short and make it at a neutral place if that would help.

Often there are families made up of lots of different people due to family breakdown, new relationships, and blended families, so there is a need for flexibility. Be open to new ideas and keep in mind not to overload yourself or your family.

Plan for a break after festivities are over. Be grateful for what you experienced, and make a mental note for what did not go well for next year. If you have experienced a loss this year then find some time to honour that loss, being reflective or carrying out a special ritual that helps you. It's always the special holiday times when we miss those lost even more.

Please visit our website: www.gidgetfoundation.org.au

Please note that all Gidget House locations and our Start Talking program will close for the Christmas period on Thursday 19th December 2019. Unfortunately, we are therefore unable to take any more new client bookings until the new year. All our services will reopen as normal on Monday 13th January 2020.

For crisis support during our closure please call Lifeline on 13 11 14