

10 TIPS FOR MANAGING EXPECTATIONS AT CHRISTMAS

Christmas is a time of joy, love and laughter. But, errrr, it can also be a time of stress, drama and tears! Families are often the centre of our lives, but we still have problems, and may even struggle with loneliness at Christmas. As much as we love giving gifts, it's easy to blow the budget. Christmas dinner may be delicious, but it comes with stress and, again, cost.

Setting realistic expectations of ourselves and others, will help us enjoy Christmas for what it is, not what we wish it could be. Here are our Top 10 Tips:

THINK ABOUT WHAT'S IMPORTANT

Firstly, make a list of the things that are important to you about Christmas—focus on values, rather than things. Then feel free to ditch all the traditions that don't make the list.

TALK TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT GIFTS

You are doing much more for your kids by avoiding stress and debt, than by giving them the latest and greatest gifts. Some families have a rule like: 'something to play with, something to wear and something to read'.

SAY NO TO COMPARISON

Remember that most of the ideals we're bombarded with are solely so people can make money off you at Christmas. Instead, refuse to compare yourself to the fantasy.

DON'T OVERDO IT

Everyone has different energy levels depending on their personality, so be true to you and say 'no' when it becomes stressful.

TEACH YOUR KIDS WHAT'S IMPORTANT

Come up with your own family traditions that reflect your values. You don't have to spend lots of money to find ways of expressing love at Christmas.

MAKE STRATEGIES FOR FAMILY

Be honest with yourself about the triggers and tensions you are likely to experience with your family, and strategize ways to deal with it—what topics are best avoided? What boundaries do you need to make for yourself?

DON'T GIVE SANTA TOO MUCH CREDIT

If your kids still believe in Santa, consider explaining that it's not Santa who gives the big gifts—he didn't give a PS4 to your kids' friend, and only gave them a water gun. Perhaps the big gifts can come from you, and smaller pressies from Santa?

REMEMBER, IT'S JUST A MEAL

No, you don't need all the trimmings. Create a menu that will make Christmas enjoyable for you—you don't need to be in the kitchen all day.

ANSWER BACK

Think of how you are going to respond to that relative that always makes *that* comment to you.

ASK FOR HELP

Other people are generally happy to contribute, yet we find it hard to ask for help. In what ways can you allow others to contribute?