

Friday, 8 December 2017

Kids Helpline's tips for a stress free Christmas

Family conflict, financial worries and too much alcohol can mean Christmas is more stressful than festive for both kids and parents, but by following a few simple steps this does not have to be the case.

According to Kids Helpline Virtual Services Manager Tony FitzGerald, while Kids Helpline gets calls all year around about family relationships the Christmas season is a hot spot for contacts about family conflict and worry.

"Family relationships is the second most frequent reason why children and young people contact us throughout the year but at Christmas time there are more kids at home and mums and dads struggling to put Christmas celebrations together," Mr FitzGerald said.

"It's not surprising that with increased financial worries, possible alcohol at this time and attempts to create the perfect Christmas that stress and conflict kicks in.

"We'd like to share some ideas on what we can all do to help make the holiday season a great event."

Kids Helpline's tips for making the most of Christmas

1. Remember, most importantly, that this is a time for celebration, reflection and relaxation.
2. Don't try and create the 'perfect' Christmas. The media can sometimes portray imagery that can set unrealistic expectations. Live up to your own standards and not someone else's.
3. Think about last Christmas - what worked and what didn't, and learn from that to plan what you're going to do this year.
4. Keep things simple - if family are coming, get everyone to bring a little something that way no-one feels pressured to do all the work.
5. Set a budget and stick to it. It's not all about the presents. A great school holiday activity for kids is to get them to make their own gifts.
6. If you're having financial difficulties don't be afraid to reach out to support agencies and ask for help. They know some people are doing it tough.
7. Encourage each other to be tolerant of others at Christmas time. On Christmas Day, if there are lots of people over have a chill out space for people to get away from the crowd.
8. Alcohol can sometimes make things worse. Keep an on eye on how much you and others drink.
9. Role model to your children how you would like them to handle tension. They will pick up on what you do and this can help them handle their own interactions with family and friends.
10. If buying gifts has become too expensive, maybe decide as a family to donate an amount or your time to charity. Christmas is a time of giving and sharing and there are many that will appreciate your donation.
11. Talk things over with someone. If it all becomes too much, talk things over with a friend or a service like Kids Helpline (for young people aged 5-25) or Parentline in your state or territory. Helplines offer someone confidential and impartial to talk with and really can help.

Kids Helpline is Australia's only FREE, private and confidential phone and online counselling service for children and young people aged 5 to 25 years. Free call **1800 55 1800** or **www.kidshelpline.com.au**

Parents or carers in Queensland and the Northern Territory looking for support can contact Parentline on **1300 30 1300** or **parentline.com.au** or go to <https://www.parentline.com.au/getting-help/who-else-can-help/other-helpline-services.php> for parent helpline services in your State or Territory.

ENDS

INTERVIEW/PHOTO/FILMING OPPORTUNITIES

- Brendan Bourke, **yourtown** Head of Client Services/KHL
- Tony FitzGerald, Kids Helpline Virtual Services Manager
- Louise Davis, Kids Helpline Clinical Practice Manager
- KHL Counsellors
- VNR footage available of Kids Helpline call centre

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