



Christmas sanity tips

The Christmas shops have already opened, and you think XMAS is still a fair way away, but from now on, time to get organized for the festive season seems to slip away fast.

Labour weekend is when some traditionally make the XMAS pudding. For some reason, this time point seems to be the starting line, and the race finishes at XMAS.

My experience over the years shows that the two major times for burn out and depression are towards the end of the winter, and just before XMAS.

The reasons for increased stress before XMAS are:

- Increased load on top of an already loaded, complex lifestyle – get presents, organize holidays, organize family reunions, send cards, get everything done. Etc
- Business deadlines. Many businesses close for a few days, but some for three to four weeks – there are often deadlines for projects to be finished before the holidays
- Some desire their personal projects to be finished by the holidays e.g. You want your dream kitchen finished for Xmas
- Many leave things to the last minute – more stressful deadlines
- Pre – XMAS parties – the 'work do' you can't avoid. All the others. Too much alcohol and food.

Most people do prepare for a XMAS that nevertheless, is not looked forward to -

- Dealing with people you would rather not deal with e.g. ex- spouses, in laws, cousin Joe who you can't stand etc
- Its at your place this year – you are exhausted, and still need to put the dinner on for 20 with all the trimmings
- Then there are all the other relatives you need to visit because they will be offended if you don't

In summary, it's:

- Lack of control
- Overload upon overload
- Deadlines
- Sleep deprivation
- Increased food and alcohol.

Which leads to:

- Fatigue and exhaustion
- Depressed mood (which can masquerade as pain)
- Anxiety – irritability, 'short fuse'
- Reduced motivation
- Weight gain / loss
- Not coping well – can't concentrate, poor memory, can't make decisions, can't organize yourself.

THEN EVERYTHING GETS WORSE... and you end up doing the wrong thing....

Advice to avoid these problems includes:

1. Plan for XMAS now - get an early start on your work and domestic preparations. Make a simple plan then set it in motion.
 2. Establish priorities – work out what is important and what is not.
- At home, you and your family come first. Unimportant things for strangers are the lowest and can be scratched.
 - At work - do some forward planning to prevent last minute panic. Get your time management sorted. Organize interruption - free work time each day so you can get things done.
 - Learn to say 'No'. Have some polite refusals ready e.g. "I have too many projects on at present" or "it doesn't fit with my schedule" etc.
3. Work smarter not harder
- Get rid of daily hassles - delegate more, accept mediocrity in some areas that are not important e.g. if a workingwoman, get a housekeeper.
4. Get enough sleep, at the right time – be in bed and asleep by 10.30pm
 5. To cope with parties, alcohol and food here are a few tips:
- Don't starve yourself before a party
 - Eat before you go to a Party e.g. nuts, light snack - reduces eating/drinking wrong stuff.

XMAS roast is great for weight loss

- Eat kumara instead of potato
- No gravy
- Apple sauce made without sugar
- Cherries – strong antioxidants
- Nuts – lower cholesterol, source of healthy fatty acids.

And most of all.....Good Luck!