Making Merry this Christmas

For many, Christmas can be merry or miserable, manic or filled with panic, mad or sad. Whatever your perspective – being aware of your personal boundaries and staying within those boundaries can help you get through this period in one piece. It’s about knowing your boundaries, and sticking to them!

Work & Boundaries

• Planning to attend the office Christmas party? Remember it is a WORK function and you’ll still have to face your boss and colleagues in the morning
• If you usually drive to work, when attending the Christmas function plan to get a taxi home if you’re intending to drink
• Look out for your colleagues when out ‘partying’
• Pace yourself at work – if Christmas is an extremely busy time for you at work – try asking for help or prioritise your work. If it is a slow time for you, now is the time to catch up on all those projects you’ve been putting off.

Family & Boundaries

Love them or loathe them, chances are you will be required to spend some time with your family. Based on past experiences you might find yourself being pulled in all directions by various family members or in-laws or criticised for not spending enough time with significant others. It’s a good idea to:

• Temper your expectations – it’s unlikely you’re going to please everyone
• Negotiate family visits – schedule your holiday period like you would a working day, making sure you leave plenty of time for you to relax and indulge in the things that give you pleasure
• Drink in moderation
• If you are alone during the Christmas period you might want to consider volunteering or engaging in community activities in your area
• If you are going to be alone for the first time this Christmas, expect to experience periods of sadness – this is normal.

Finances & Boundaries

Sure you can spend now and pay later, but think about it. The February credit card bill will come around more quickly than you imagined, so remember your boundaries!

• Budget for Christmas and stick to it
• Consider Kris Kringle rather than expensive gifts
• Make your own gifts (pickles, jams, scrapbooking)
Sustainable Gift Ideas

Here are some ideas for sustainable gifts, suggested by the Australian Psychological Society:

How about getting your workplace to organise an ethical, sustainable Kris Kringle this year, where gifts are chosen on the basis that they contribute to one or more of the following: equity of resources, ecologically sustainable practices, reduction of greenhouse emissions.

Gifts might include Fair Trade products, handmade or recycled gifts, sustainably produced non-animal tested products, a poem, or contributions to charitable organisations. Gifts could be selected from organisations such as Oxfam, Red Cross, Amnesty, the ACF or the Wilderness Society.

The benefits include:

• Pleasure without hedonism
• Support for the poor and disadvantaged
• Contributing to sustainable living practices
• Helping the survival of the Planet
• Stimulating creative new gift ideas
• Encouraging awareness, discussion and communication
• Bringing multiple benefits to the recipient and the producer
• Reducing ‘Consumption Distress Syndrome’

Keeping it all in perspective

Above all, let’s remember to keep this period of preparation and expectations in its proper perspective.

A lot of our stresses during this time are linked to the unrealistic expectations of experiencing a wonderfully blissful and happy one day towards which we focus a lot of our attention. The reality is of course different for most of us. The Christmas day passes just like any other and a few days later it is mostly forgotten. Striving to make the best impression on everyone in the family, and finding the perfect gift creates pressures that no-one can live up to. So it’s time to adjust those expectations and enjoy the Season for what it is meant to be – a time to connect with our families and friends or reflect on those we loved who are no longer with us, and a time to recharge our emotional batteries.

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