

How to survive your menopausal Christmas



Christmas: love it or hate it, we all experience it. For most of us it involves a lot of hard work before, during and after the day itself.

If you're suffering from hot flushes, lack of sleep and mood swings, Christmas just keeps on giving with everything that make them worse: alcohol, sweet food, real fires, your head constantly in the oven, your house bursting at the seams, three generations cooped up together, and I've not even mentioned the reindeer jumper or the presents you have to pretend to love.

Be selfish

Yes, it might be hard, but this is the time to demand some 'me time'. Do something every day just for you. It might be a twenty minute brisk walk round the block, a long warm bath, retiring to your bedroom with a book for an hour, doing some yoga or mindfulness exercises, phoning a friend and sharing. And make no secret of the fact you need some time out.

Delegate

Being assertive takes practise. It's not about being bossy or aggressive. It's about stating your needs and treating others with respect when you ask for what you need. A lot of unhappiness stems from not being able to state your needs, expecting other people to mind read, and feeling resentful when they don't. Assertiveness is something I help clients with either to build happier relationships or in the workplace.

You can be a martyr in the kitchen if you want or you could enlist the help of family. Before the day itself decide who is going to do what. Whether that's peel the potatoes, throw a log on the fire, or clear away the dishes, don't let it be you doing it all.





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Have realistic expectations

We all hope for a lovely time over Christmas which lives up to the warm glow from those television adverts. You may well achieve that but for many of us it's a time of tension when blended or long distance families try to overcome their differences and make an effort for one day a year. Ask yourself - what would make a successful Christmas for you? It may be as simple as no one falling out, the teenagers not arguing, and everyone mucking in so you aren't the only one doing the work. How can you make that happen? What do you need to do to prepare for that? In other words, how can you be pro-active?

Be healthy

Christmas is a time of indulgence, but are all those nibbles worth it if by 1 January you have put on five pounds? Unfortunately, Christmas is a bit of a hand grenade when it comes to menopause; it blows everything up you've been trying to achieve, including your waist line. Or does it? Alcohol, sugary and spicy food can often exacerbate hot flushes and mood swings. You don't need to be a party pooper, but you can draw up some goals for yourself to keep the treats in check. Whether that's allowing yourself one alcoholic drink a day, no nibbles between meals, or a couple of chocolates rather than the entire box, you know

your limits and can choose what to aim for. Or you may want to try being self-indulgent only on Christmas day then being very self-disciplined for the rest of the festive season. If you're drinking in company and find alcohol makes you hotter and your flushes worse, are you comfortable with asking for a soft drink only? Are you able to give it some thought beforehand?

Above all, look after yourself as well as everyone else and think how you can apply these behavioural changes to the coming year.

If you put any of this into practise and feel like sharing your success with other readers, I'd love to hear from you (and you can be anon.) If you'd like to suggest topics for future blogs, drop me a line via my website.

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and breathe