Mental Health Ireland

Family Relationships at Christmas



Family gatherings during the holiday season can bring stressful situations and emotional challenges, often stemming from high expectations, complex dynamics, and sometimes unwanted comments. These tools are suggested to help you navigate these interactions in a way that maintains your emotional wellbeing and boundaries.

Define your limits

Think ahead about what feels manageable for you in terms of time, topics and interactions. Set limits, such as how long you will stay at gatherings.

Keep in touch with friends

If you are feeling overwhelmed, it can be helpful to have a trusted friend or partner you can text or call.

Plan in advance

Set a start and end time for your visit and let the host know you will need to leave at a specific hour.

Find common interests

Connect with family members over shared interests or positive memories. This can create lighter and more enjoyable interactions.

Communicate expectations

Let family members know in advance if there are sensitive topics you would prefer to avoid, or if you need to leave at a certain time. **Remember, it is ok to say no.**



Practice a reset technique

Breathing exercises, mindfulness, or listening to calming music can be good ways to recharge during the breaks. This can help shift your focus away from family stressors.

Plan an activity to de-stress after gatherings

For example, watching your favourite show, reading, or doing a skincare routine.

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