The Festive Season is upon us! As well as being a joyous time of eating, drinking and being merry, for many people the festive season can be one of the most stressful times of the year.

So what can you do to survive the season and come out the other end actually feeling you have had a break, rather than feeling in desperate need of one? The following tips are designed to help you find relaxation during this often-emotional time.

1. **Get yourself organised**
   Christmas is a very hectic time so make sure you are organised. Make yourself lists of all the people you need to buy for, all the food you need and places to go. Start your Christmas shopping early, write your cards early and be organised. Being organised will really reduce your stress levels.

2. **Don’t overspend**
   Overspending is bad for your bank balance and your mental health. If you are not already, now is the time to save a percentage of your disposable income to provide a nest egg for Christmas expenses. Discuss options of Christmas saving ideas like Kris Kringle or home-made gifts only.

3. **Don’t try and do everything**
   If you are responsible for cooking and hosting the Christmas Day activities, then don’t take it all upon yourself. Why not ask other family members to bring different parts of the meal, such as snacks, salads or desserts – don’t be afraid to ask for help. Make sure you have some time for YOU.

4. **Everything in moderation**
   It may be the season to be jolly, but too much food and alcohol is harmful. If you can't (or don't want to) step off the social merry-go-round, at least try to eat and drink in moderation.
5. Rehydrate
If you have overdone it on the alcohol, then it is important to get yourself back on an even keel. Even if you have been good by consuming non-alcoholic drinks in between – the chances are you could still be feeling pretty rough. Don’t just sit there feeling ill – get up and drink plenty of water and diluted fruit juice to help your liver recover and eventually remove the hangover.

6. Keep moving
A brisk walk, light jog or swim will help work off those extra roast potatoes and all those second helpings you may have had. Getting active will also help you feel normal again, dispel any festive cabin fever and help repair some of the overindulging that you may have done.

7. Sleep
Sleeping is the time when our bodies recover from the excesses of life. Drinking and eating too much can severely affect our sleep patterns, as can the frequent late nights that are a regular occurrence during the festive period. Over Christmas and New Year, many people are sleep-starved; make sure you get some quality sleep – even if it is just a few hours.

8. If you’re feeling down, do something opposite to how you feel.
The holidays can bring up sadness, regrets and other painful emotions. Change your mood by engaging in activities that are opposite to how you’re feeling. Read emotional books, listen to emotional music or go to emotional movies.

9. Don’t be on your own
Being alone at Christmas when everyone else seems to be with their families may make vulnerable people feel isolated. If you are concerned about being lonely over Christmas, do something about it now. Plan ahead and make arrangements to spend time with people you like and who can support you.

10. Help is at hand
If you require lifestyle support, counselling or coaching, please contact our free counselling service provider, Davidson Trahaire Corpsych on 1300 360 364 or visit their website www.eapdirect.com.au. Click on the Register Here icon and enter:

Organisation Name: Royal Children’s Hospital
Token: rchusr
Password: usrkey

This service is available to all RCH employees and their immediate family members. Remember, your first 6 appointments are FREE. Alternatively, call the beyondblue Infoline 1300 22 4636. In a crisis situation, call Lifeline 13 11 14.

This time of year can be tiring, lonely, overwhelming, financially difficult and can bring up painful conflicts and reminders of painful circumstances and feelings. Not all of these strategies will be right for you. Choose two or three that you believe will help you and try them. They just might help you get through the season with a little less stress and a few more moments of calm and peace.