

GIFT YOURSELF THE JOY OF WELLNESS AND PEACE THIS CHRISTMAS



THE FAIRY LIGHTS ARE TWINKLING, THE SHOPS ARE HEAVING, AND YOUR TO-DO LIST SEEMS TO GROW LONGER BY THE HOUR. FOR ALL ITS SPARKLE AND SENTIMENT, CHRISTMAS CAN BE AN EXHAUSTING TIME. BETWEEN WORK DEADLINES, FAMILY GATHERINGS, PARTIES, PRESENTS AND THE PRESSURE TO MAKE EVERYTHING PERFECT, IT'S NO WONDER SO MANY OF US END UP COLLAPSING ON THE SOFA BY BOXING DAY, WONDERING WHERE OUR FESTIVE SPIRIT WENT.

But what if we did it differently this year? What if the season could feel joyful and manageable. With a little planning and a lot of kindness (mainly towards yourself), it absolutely can. Here's our guide to staying well, calm and genuinely happy over the festive season.

Breathe.

1. Lower the bar – Christmas doesn't have to be perfect

Every December, television ads and social media feeds set an impossible standard: flawless decorations, matching pyjamas, and roast potatoes that crisp to perfection. The reality, of course, is far different, but far more human.

So, here's your permission slip to let "perfect" go. If the turkey's dry, a delivery goes missing, or someone forgets the crackers, it doesn't matter. You'll remember the laughter, not the logistics.

Choose joy over performance. Simplify where you can, say no when you need to, and remind yourself that Christmas shouldn't be measured by Instagram posts or five-star gravy.

2. Protect your energy

The festive season can feel like a marathon of 'to-do' lists. Work socials, school concerts, last-minute shopping, back-to-back dinners. It's easy to get swept up and burn out before the King's Speech.

You don't have to attend every invitation or host every meal. It's perfectly acceptable to say, "Thanks, but I'm having a quiet one tonight." Rest is not laziness; it's self-preservation.

If you're hosting, ask for help. Let others bring dishes, pour drinks, or handle the playlist. A shared effort makes for a shared experience, and a much calmer host.

Think of your energy as a battery. Keep it charged with rest, healthy food, and time alone when you need it. By protecting your peace, you'll actually have more to give.

3. Breathe before you break

When you're rushing about with arms full of shopping bags or your mind full of lists, your breathing tends to speed up and tighten. A few deep breaths can stop that stress response in its tracks.

Try this:

- Inhale through your nose for a slow count of four.
- Hold for four.
- Exhale gently through your mouth for four.
- Repeat three times.

It's a small act with big impact. You can do it anywhere: in a queue, before a difficult conversation, or even when the wrapping paper runs out again. It's a moment of calm that costs nothing, but gives plenty.

4. Move for joy, not punishment

Exercise might not feel appealing when it's dark by 4pm and the sofa's calling, but movement is one of the best remedies for stress. The trick is to make it joyful rather than a chore.

A brisk walk on a crisp morning, a stretch while the kettle boils, or a kitchen dance-off all counts. Movement keeps your energy steady, boosts your mood, and helps counter the sluggishness of too much rich food and too little daylight.

And yes, the traditional Boxing Day walk really does work wonders. Think of it as a reset rather than a regime.

5. Eat well, but enjoy the indulgence

Christmas is deliciously full of temptation with those cheese boards, puddings, mulled wine and mince pies galore. The goal isn't to resist it all; it's to find balance.

Eat mindfully. Savour your food instead of grazing endlessly. Include some colourful vegetables alongside the roast, and keep a glass of water nearby. Most of all, drop the guilt. Food is meant to be enjoyed, especially when it's shared.

6. Prioritise sleep

Late nights, rich food and fizz can make restful sleep elusive. But if you can keep a gentle rhythm, your body and mind will thank you.

Try winding down half an hour before bed: lights low, screens off, maybe a bath or a book. Even ten minutes of calm before sleep helps your brain switch gears.

If you're struggling to nod off, don't panic. A short nap or a quiet sit-down the next day can work wonders.

7. Mind your mental health

For some, Christmas isn't all joy and laughter. It can stir up grief, loneliness, or old tensions. If the season feels heavy, be kind to yourself.

You don't have to plaster on a smile. Reach out to a friend, a neighbour, a helpline, or a community group. You might be surprised to know how many others feel the same.

It can also help to create your own version of the holiday, one that feels right for you. That might mean volunteering, keeping things small, or spending the day differently. There's no rulebook for a "proper" Christmas.

8. Find little moments of stillness

Even in the busiest week, try to carve out moments that are just for you. Sit quietly with a cuppa before the chaos begins. Step outside and feel the cold air on your face. Listen to soothing music.

You don't need an hour-long meditation session. Just a few mindful minutes here and there can help you stay grounded and realise that calm is still possible amid the noise.

9. Step gently into the new year

After the whirlwind of December, it's tempting to leap into January with strict resolutions and detox plans. But what if, instead, you eased into it slowly?

Rather than setting punishing goals, think about how you want to feel in the months ahead. Then choose small habits that support those feelings.

New year, same you, just a bit more rested and ready.

A final thought

Christmas doesn't need to be perfect to be wonderful. You don't have to do everything, fix everything, or please everyone. What really matters are the small, genuine moments, the laughter around the table, a walk in the cold, a quiet evening by the tree.

So this festive season, take a breath. Let go of the pressure. Savour what's in front of you, because the best gift you can give yourself, and everyone around you, is a version of you that's calm, kind, and well.



Stillness.