

14 December 2010

### **Tips to survive (and enjoy) Christmas**

Christmas is a stressful time as expectations of ourselves and our family come into focus on one day. Our family and our life may not be exactly what we dream about, but we can manage the expectations and enjoy the season anyway. Relationships Australia Victoria (RAV) has some tips on preparing for the big day and handling Christmas Day itself.

#### **Before the big day**

- Don't leave wrapping till the last minute – do it as you go to avoid a huge amount of wrapping the night before.
- Instead of buying presents for every member of your family, organise a Kris Kringle, agreeing on a maximum price to be spent. Put names into a hat and make a list letting people know who has which person.
- Consider celebrating on Christmas Eve so you are not rushing between families on Christmas Day.
- Budget well and remember that more is not necessarily better. Most people like a present that shows thoughtfulness, not dollar value.
- Organise a roster so that each family member can bring a meat and either a salad or a dessert; this takes the financial and preparation pressure off one person and gives the family a chance to work as a team.

#### **On Christmas Day**

- Lower your expectations of the day and focus on the joy of Christmas, not the demands and pressure.
- Reflect on past events by looking at some old photos or items of special significance.
- Remember family members who are no longer with you.
- Take group photos which will show over time the expansion of the family and provide an opportunity for Christmas rituals.
- Limit your intake of alcohol – behaviour can get out of hand.
- Play some games – encourage the children and adults to play backyard cricket, table tennis, badminton or a trivia quiz. Sharing activities will release tension and provide a sense of fun.
- If you are alone, plan in advance to do something you enjoy or get together with friend who is also alone.

And finally, don't try to resolve year-long hurts or disagreements on Christmas Day – use the next 364 days to sort out relationship issues. RAV has counselling and relationship education programs and has centres across the State. For more information call 1300 364 277.