



Managing anxiety during the Festive Season

The Festive Season is a time of joy and celebration for Australia's multiple cultures and religions.

However, it can also be a time of stress and anxiety.

Over December and January your usual routines will probably change as you host family members, mingle with neighbours, meet new people, and catch up with old friends who you haven't seen for a while.

Some people might not be aware that you are living with Parkinson's. Others may know yet be surprised by how your Parkinson's symptoms have progressed since last you met.

Anxiety and depression are part and parcel of Parkinson's for up to 40 percent of people living with the disease. Situational factors can add additional stress.

Some common symptoms of anxiety include:

-  Hot and cold flushes
-  Racing heart
-  Tightening of the chest
-  Snowballing worries
-  Obsessive thinking
-  Compulsive behaviour.

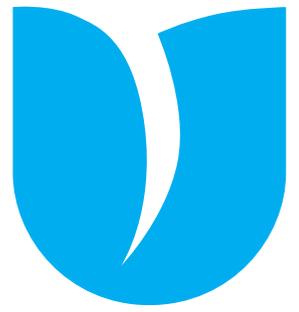
Depression is more serious than feeling sad, moody or low from time to time – we all experience that. Depression is when you experience these feelings intensely for long periods of time – weeks, months or even years.

Some people living with Parkinson's also have anxiety related to the 'on/off' state of their motor symptoms. When 'off' and less able to move well, they may experience symptoms of anxiety – and even panic attacks.

Grounding exercises for coping with worry or anxiety

Take a breath and look around you

- 5** things you can see
- 4** things you can touch
- 3** things you can hear
- 2** things you can smell
- 1** things you can taste



So, what can you do for yourself during the Festive Season to avoid or manage anxiety and depression?

- 💡 Since this time of year can bring up tensions with family, it is a good idea to have a plan in mind for how you will manage your feelings of anxiety.

Make sure that you have some space for rest. You may plan this with your partner or carer beforehand that you take some time out for sleep or simply resting in a quiet room.

- 💡 If you have a high tension, high conflict family situation, arrange with your carer to go out somewhere for the main festive meal rather than have it at home.

If having it at home is unavoidable, make sure you have a private space you can go to take a break from the tension.

- 💡 Drink only moderate amounts of alcohol, particularly if it's a hot day. Alcohol is dehydrating. It's a good idea to drink two glasses of water in between glasses of alcohol.

Alcohol can also be a disinhibitor and sometimes we may turn to it to cope with stress. But it is also a depressant, so it is wise to know your limits.

If your Christmas brings up painful feelings that you are struggling with, make sure you reach out. There are free services like Lifeline that are available 24 hours.

Lifeline

13 11 14

www.lifeline.org.au

Beyond Blue

1300 22 4636

www.beyondblue.org.au

Resources

Parkinson's NSW InfoLine Tel: 1800 644 189

US National Parkinson's Foundation <https://www.parkinson.org/>

Parkinson's Disease Society UK <https://www.parkinsons.org.uk/>

beyond blue <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/>

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