

# Christmas!

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Historically the Christmas and New Year period sees an increase in the number of nurses and midwives who present to the VNHP for support with substance use issues or assistance in managing stress, anxiety or depression. Nurses and midwives are no different to the rest of society. On the whole most of us will feel at least a little pressure to participate in the traditions of Christmas. Inherent in this are expectations to buy gifts, attend parties or functions, mix with family and friends, meet with our social, work or recreation groups and generally get involved.

For some of our colleagues without partners, children, friends and connections to their local community this can also be a very lonely and isolating time.

All of this can make for a tough time as these demands and realisations can bring substantial stress, worry and sadness. It can be enormously taxing from an emotional, mental and physical perspective. Not to mention the financial strain which can result. It is common at this time of year for the VNHP to see nurses and midwives who struggle to cope with the thoughts and feelings that arise from their personal circumstances.

It is the time of year when substance use increases in direct correlation with social engagements, leading to the assumption that it is acceptable to over-indulge, especially in relation to alcohol consumption.

Our participants will also describe using their substance of choice as a way of avoiding having to think about their reality at this time. Past participants have described wanting to block out the feelings and not emerge until mid January!

Our aim at the VNHP, particularly at this time of year, is to support nurses and midwives to navigate these challenges with the goal of managing their stressors in a way which will promote and maintain good health.

In years past we have assisted our participants to; assess their own set of circumstances; avoid potentially stressful situations; minimise the stressful circumstance if events can't be avoided; promote contacts and relations with people and circumstances which will promote happiness, positivity and wellness. We as nurses and midwives have a great responsibility to the public. We also have a responsibility to care for ourselves. The festive season can bring with it challenges so it's important to remember to take care of ourselves at this time.

It might be best to keep things simple! Try to get enough sleep; minimise your substance intake; drink enough water; try to eat well and balanced; get some exercise (any movement enjoy; do something nice for yourself (or someone else) just for the sake of it!

The VNHP will be available for information and support throughout the Christmas / New Year period; however will be closed on public holidays.

For support during these times you can contact Direct Line 1800 888 236 or Lifeline 13 11 14.