

View this article online at: [patient.info/news-and-features/how-to-manage-social-anxiety-during-christmas-gatherings](https://patient.info/news-and-features/how-to-manage-social-anxiety-during-christmas-gatherings)

## How to manage social anxiety during Christmas gatherings

Christmas can be a stressful time for many of us. There can be a lot of rushing around and social events to prepare for, as well as high expectations. If you struggle with social anxiety, the festive season can bring additional challenges. However, it is possible to control your anxiety so you can still enjoy Christmas in a way that feels manageable for you.

### What is social anxiety and who can be affected by it?

Psychotherapist [Andre Radmall](#) explains that [social anxiety](#) is a [stress](#) reaction to being with groups of other people. It can be heightened by being in less structured groups, such as social events or parties. Social anxiety can cause a really overwhelming fear of social situations. It can occur on its own or may coexist with other mental health conditions. It is sometimes linked to underlying [depression](#). Anyone can be affected by social anxiety.

### How does social anxiety present itself?

Radmall explains that people who suffer with social anxiety feel like running away, hiding or avoiding social contact in situations that make them anxious. Their levels of anxiety create a fight or flight reaction.

Furthermore, life coach [Natalie Trice](#) explains the physical ways [social anxiety](#) can present itself.

If a person feels uncomfortable in a situation, this can lead to:

- Blushing.
- [Sweating](#).

- [Shaking](#).
- Trembling.
- Difficulty communicating.

However, Trice adds that the [anxiety](#) can be too much for some people.

"In this instance, they can simply stop accepting invitations, ignore phone calls and texts, and keep a low profile on social media. The fear of saying the wrong thing, turning red due to blushing or worrying that they look or sound wrong can be enough to keep people at home. Consequently, this can drive a bigger wedge between them and the world."

## Why might anxiety be increased around Christmas time?

We often spend more time with people over [Christmas](#). Whether it's office parties, family meals, or drinks with friends, social gatherings can be inescapable. For those who struggle with social anxiety, having a jam-packed calendar can be too much.

"The thought of having to go and mix with people, maybe strangers, is hard for some people. Being thrown into multiple social situations in a short space of time, including [New Year's Eve](#), can feel very demanding," says Trice.

Radmall echoes this, adding, "In addition, Christmas festivities increase [unpredictable behaviour](#) in others, which is often linked to [alcohol](#). This makes it a more difficult time for those who like familiarity."

## What are some forms of self-care you can practise in the lead-up to Christmas to ease anxiety?

Preparation is key when you have [social anxiety](#). Trice suggests looking at your diary for December and working out how much you are happy to do and how much you feel you can take on.

"If you don't want to do office drinks and parties, don't do it, but have a reason ready so you aren't put on the spot and then say yes and stress in the lead up to the event. Take it easy and be gentle with yourself. You don't want to risk harming your health or experiencing [burnout](#) by biting off more than you can chew."

Trice also emphasises the importance of balance, even over the Christmas period when routine usually goes out of the window.

"There is no rule book for how to spend Christmas. You should do what feels right and manageable for you, always prioritising your well-being. I suggest scheduling in rest days so you have those to look forward to, and balancing out the celebrations with relaxation. For example, if you have a busy Christmas Day with family, you could have Boxing Day to yourself, spending it at home in front of the TV.

"You need to look after yourself, so don't feel guilty for making your own arrangements or even cancelling plans. Put dates in your diary and if you are struggling to stick to them, let people know in advance. It's an even better thing if you can be honest, as they may be able to help."

## **What could you do during a gathering to manage your anxiety?**

### **Tips for keeping your anxiety under control during a social gathering**

- Plan as much as possible beforehand – know who will be there for you to speak to, what activities will take place, and start and finish times.
- Know your escape routes – these are places you can retreat to if you need a quiet moment to regain energy, such as a bathroom or garden. Radmall suggests breaking the social event into different time slots. Once you get through each of these, give yourself a break.
- Take a bottle of water.
- Use relaxation apps – Trice recommends [Calm](#), which offers [meditation](#) and soothing sounds.

- **Avoid alcohol** – it's fine to enjoy one or possibly two drinks. However, too much fizz might not give that confidence you hope for. It can heighten your anxiety and lead to a major **hangover**.
- Try to get out for a walk – taking a walk in the middle of the day, feeling the solid ground beneath your feet and immersing yourself in nature is a great stabiliser.
- Arrange a phone call with a friend – schedule a time to chat with a friend during the event. Pick someone who can offer comfort and reassurance, or a distraction.
- Practise **deep-breathing** exercises if you feel yourself panicking.

## **When should you contact a doctor if you're struggling with anxiety?**

You don't have to deal with your anxiety alone. If you feel it is stopping you from doing things you used to enjoy, interrupting your **sleep** or impacting work and relationships, you should seek help.

Trice highlights the bravery in asking for support, reminding you that struggling doesn't make you weak.

"You might want to open up to a trusted friend or loved one before consulting your GP. Your doctor will listen and can offer appropriate treatment to help make your life easier. This could be forms of therapy or anti-anxiety medication," she says.

Randmall also recommends seeking medical help if you continually try anti-anxiety coping strategies, but they don't work.

"If your anxiety regularly interferes with your everyday life, anxiety is paralysing you and preventing you from relating to others or going to work, you should call a doctor."

You are not facing this by yourself, and support is out there.

**Disclaimer:** This article is for information only and should not be used for the diagnosis or treatment of medical conditions. Egton Medical Information Systems Limited has used all reasonable care in compiling the information but makes no warranty as to its accuracy. Consult a doctor or other healthcare professional for diagnosis and treatment of medical conditions. For details see our [conditions](#).

Authored by:	Peer Reviewed by: Dr Sarah Jarvis MBE, FRCGP	
Originally Published: 24/02/2024	Next review date: 08/12/2023	Document ID: doc_31666

---

View this article online at: [patient.info/news-and-features/how-to-manage-social-anxiety-during-christmas-gatherings](https://patient.info/news-and-features/how-to-manage-social-anxiety-during-christmas-gatherings)

Discuss How to manage social anxiety during Christmas gatherings and find more trusted resources at [Patient](#).



To find out more visit [www.patientaccess.com](https://www.patientaccess.com)  
or download the app



Follow us

