



Edwina Hawkrige Counselling – **Christmas with an Eating Disorder**

Christmas with an eating disorder can be a difficult time of year, below are some things that can help make the Christmas period easier.

Pre-Christmas

Get a trusted person to speak to any attendees over the holiday period; they are not to comment on your weight (either negatively or positively) or the quantity of the food you are eating. Comment from others about your Eating Disorder or your body is off limits.

Think about and plan for where you will sit to eat on Christmas day, make the environment as comfortable as possible and be next to people who understand your Eating Disorder.

Decide ahead of the day, how you would like to portion your meal, things you will include and if it is easier to serve yourself or be served, what time the meal will be, and who else will be there.

Decide beforehand of what you will do with edible presents (food bank donation, throw them away, re-gift or share them with others in your family)

Plan for Christmas day create a flexible meal plan with detail of what you are likely to have. This avoids having to make decisions on the spot.

Consider which bits of Christmas are necessary to your wellbeing.

Talk about the structure of Christmas day, anything that is worrying you and whether a trial run could be helpful.





The Big Day

Food being served away from the table can help keep anxiety around food overwhelm under control.

Consider having music on whilst eating your Christmas dinner as a form of distraction and to add to the atmosphere.

Plan for after the main Christmas meal an activity or short walk something to keep you occupied and away from sitting in your feelings.

Have an ally at the table that can divert the conversation away from uncomfortable topics without you having to intervene.

Agree on an amount of time you will be at the table so that you don't have to sit around food for too long.

Visitors also need to be mindful of not offering you additional food, the sweet tin going round can be a tricky situation. It may be better if food stays in one room and people help themselves to snacks.

Ramp up the focus on things that are not food related the games, the films, decorating, spending time with your family etc perhaps consider starting a new non-food related tradition.

Be aware of your triggers and warning signs for binges or restriction. Make an if-then plan. For example, **if** I feel I have eaten too much food **then** I will remind myself the uncomfortableness will pass, and I will distract myself until it does. **If** I don't manage to





eat enough **then** I will remind myself that I need to continue with what I had planned, relax and try again at the next mealtime. If then plans involve an eventuality and a follow up behaviour.

Have ready a plan for dealing with difficult emotions that may arise with people in the house, remove yourself, read, relax, journal, take a shower etc if you need time out

Be aware that competitiveness may creep in with people who are faddy eaters, be aware of your hyper awareness but continue to eat and have the day that you had planned.

Connection, communication and enjoyment are the important things about Christmas, try not to worry that your family need to do things differently, by focusing on the other elements of Christmas, which are not food, it makes room for connection, communication and enjoyment for all.

Created with the help of BEAT the Eating Disorder Charity.

Edwina Hawkrige Counselling

W: EdwinaHawkrigeCounselling.com

E: info@edwinahawkrigecounselling.com

T: 07784105769.

