

CHRISTMAS EMOTIONAL NEEDS LIST

Christmas is a time for lists: Christmas buying lists, Christmas to-do-lists, Christmas wish lists. So when everyone's under even more pressure than normal, it's important not to forget our Christmas emotional needs list!

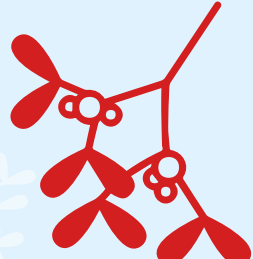
SECURITY



Keep safe. We all need to be mindful of our physical and emotional safety at this time of year, when many of us are more likely to let our hair down and perhaps drink more than usual – so many things can be said and done at office parties or Christmas gatherings, for instance, that may be regretted later.

If you're going away, make sure you've taken appropriate security measures or, if you're planning on staying at home, keep an eye on your neighbours' properties and also on their wellbeing.

ATTENTION, GIVING AND RECEIVING IT



Christmas isn't just about giving and receiving presents. It is about giving of ourselves – it's an opportunity to really notice, relate and listen to relatives, colleagues or acquaintances that we don't see often and who we may have pigeon-holed in a particular way. If we take the time to really listen, we might even learn something that surprises us.

Christmas is also a time for noticing those who tend to be largely out of sight – those who are homeless, for instance – and extending warmth and kindness.

Giving someone your sincere attention, even for a few minutes, can make all the difference to how they feel about themselves.

CONTROL



Often Christmas can feel completely out of control – particularly if you're the one doing all the frantic organising, for instance. If you tend to get resentful about this, take back some control by delegating a few jobs – perhaps making some of them seem fun for children to do, and empowering them in the process – or by lowering any unrealistic expectations you may have set for yourself.

It's also a good idea to take a step back sometimes and notice whether you tend to want to over-control things. Many of us imagine that no one else would do things as thoroughly as we would, so it's worth seeing if you can make the decision to sacrifice a little perfection for a bit more fun.

And if you're one of those people who considers spending the holiday with wider family an obligation rather than a pleasure, it can help to view it as a choice instead (after all, we are not being dragged there in chains) which can help shift our negative perspective.

And perhaps there are indeed some choices we can make, such as exactly when to arrive, when to leave, whether to take a walk and when, or which relatives to spend some special time with. It all helps us to restore a degree of autonomy.

EMOTIONAL CONNECTION



Christmas is meant to be a time of connection and lots of fun social events, and it is lovely when it all works out. But Christmas is not a happy time for everyone – for some it may trigger depression, anxiety, anger or past trauma.

We also need to be ready to reach out to those we love who may have lost someone close this year or, if we have ourselves suffered loss, to allow others to reach out to us. It is important to be especially respectful and mindful of our own and others' emotional needs at this time.

STATUS



We all need to feel valued. If someone is pulling out all the stops to make a really enjoyable Christmas for us and for others, we can ensure that we show huge appreciation for what they do. Sometimes we take the efforts of others for granted.

Adult children often revert to child status when back at the childhood home, or else feel treated that way by parents. Or perhaps sexual orientation, or one's partner, or one's way of making a living doesn't go down well with some members of the family that we will be spending time with. We all want to be respected and accepted for who we are, but if that isn't possible, we can exert control by choosing not to be riled and refuse to engage in arguments.

What is important is knowing that we are comfortable in our own skins, whatever anyone else's prejudices.

COMMUNITY



There are many events around Christmas that can bring a heightened sense of community. But many people spend the festive season alone, heightening for them their sense of isolation.

If we can give a little time to pop in on a lonely neighbour, deliver a small gift or invite them in for a mince pie, it may mean the world to them, and stop them from feeling uncared for or forgotten.

And if we know people who can't get to places unaided, perhaps we can take them to enjoy a Christmas event, such as a carol concert, local switching on of lights or events laid on by local restaurants or pubs.

PRIVACY AND REFLECTION



We can also decide to learn from last year's mistakes, if any. What do you want to do differently this time? How can you prepare in the best way to make that happen?

If you're going to be at a large family gathering, it is valuable to try to take some time for yourself too – we all need moments alone to recharge our batteries and that often gets forgotten at big occasions. An invigorating walk may do the trick, or relaxing in a long, hot bath – even offering to do some of the clearing up, alone!

ACHIEVEMENT AND COMPETENCE



Some people are brilliant at organising Christmas, whether by wrapping presents exquisitely, decorating the house and the tree imaginatively and/or tastefully, or cooking a phenomenal Christmas dinner.

If you're one of those, you will have no trouble getting this need met. But, if you aren't, perhaps you could try and find one small thing that you can work on doing really well for the festive season – what Robert Twigger calls 'micromastery' in his recent book of the same name. For instance, cooking pancakes for Boxing Day breakfast, making festive place mats, writing our Christmas card greetings in all different coloured inks – small stuff but satisfying.

MEANING AND PURPOSE



We know that Christmas is not a consumer event, whatever it may have degenerated into, and we can still approach it most powerfully by imbuing it with meaning and purpose.

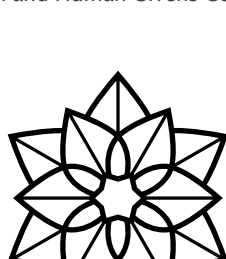
That may take a religious or spiritual form, for many; or perhaps it may come from ensuring that those we love have a happy time; or making sure that those who are struggling in any way, through poverty, loneliness or ill-health, can also have a happy time. Giving people a smile and a helping hand means so much at any time of year but particularly now.

And, if we don't choose to celebrate Christmas ourselves, there are so many charitable ways (such as at soup kitchens or shelters or hospitals) in which to lend a hand to others, whose Christmases might otherwise be sad and lonely.

With your own and everyone's else's emotional needs met,

WE WISH YOU A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS

From all the team at
HGI and Human Givens College



If someone you know is really struggling with their emotional health this Christmas, it is a good idea that they seek professional help as soon as possible – visit: www.hgi.org.uk/find-therapist to find your nearest human givens therapist.

More information about mental health and our emotional needs can be found at www.hgi.org.uk

You may find the self-help books series and informative MP3s and CDs available at: www.humangivens.com helpful too.