

MEDIA RELEASE

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RAMHP's tips for putting the 'merry' back into Christmas

Christmas can be a challenging time of year and Rural Adversity Mental Health Program (RAMHP) Coordinators across NSW are urging people to take time to look after themselves and each other and ask for help when it's needed.

With a significant part of NSW still in drought, the RAMHP team are only too aware of the extra stress and challenges that the Christmas period can bring.

RAMHP Manager Tessa Caton says, we know this year is going to be a really tough time for many people with some families experiencing additional financial stressors, relationship challenges, increased work priorities and grief and isolation. There is also the challenge of dealing with unforeseen events such as bushfires.

"We need people to be extra mindful of those who might be experiencing mental health issues and to reach out, check in and ask: Are you OK?"

"We need to continue to break down the stigma and make sure people are aware of where they can get help and reinforce the message that it is OK to ask for help," said Ms Caton

To lighten the load and help put the 'merry' back into Christmas, here are 13 practical tips from the RAMHP team.

1. **Use the gift of technology to bring family and friends to the Christmas table** – there are many apps such as FaceTime, Skype and Facebook video (*Sam Osborne –Northern NSW LHD*)
2. **Sprinkle the love that you share with family and friends** - it is free to show appreciation, be kind and find forgiveness (*Merilyn Limbrick – Murrumbidgee LHD*)
3. **Don't get caught up in consumerism** - the best gift that you can give to those that you treasure is to let them know that they are loved and appreciated (*Letitia Cross Hunter New England LHD*)
4. **Think of those less fortunate and give them a gift or donate to a charity this Christmas** – even ask your family to donate to a charity on your behalf as your present (*Judy Carmody – Southern LHD*)
5. **Stay connected – phone a family member or friend over Christmas and check in** - Christmas can be a sad and lonely time for some (*Sarah Green – Hunter New England LHD*)
6. **Take some time out to recharge for the New Year ahead** - despite the chaos that sometimes happens – it can be a time to slow things down if only for a week or so. Stop



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and enjoy the small things in life. (*Kylie Atkinson – Hunter New England LHD*)

7. **Give people the invaluable gift that doesn't cost a cent -TIME** – be completely present and truly listen to others and yourself. Maybe you need some time alone to reflect and then connect (*Jenny Keioskie – Southern LHD*)
8. **Breaking traditions- it doesn't have to be all about feasts and presents** – start a new tradition this year, focus on spending time with those who make you laugh (*Di Gill – Western LHD*)
9. **Moderate your alcohol intake** - get creative with your alternative drink choices; try a fruit punch or zero alcohol beer (*Steve Carrigg – Northern LHD*)
10. **Get sufficient sleep – it is important in the busy festive season to fit sleep in your schedule** - sufficient sleep is essential for our physical and emotional wellbeing (*Marie Kelly – Far West LHD*)
11. **Give your presence not presents** – sometimes we overlook the importance of quality time and conversations, which can mean more to a loved one than a gift (*Faith Rogers - Murrumbidgee LHD*)
12. **Take some time out if you need to** - it's not called the silly season for nothing – if you notice stress in yourself take some time off. It's OK to not want to be merry all the time. Find your calm and regroup (*Kate Arndell – Hunter New England LHD*)
13. **Remember to have some fun** – invite people over, play some backyard cricket or share some bon-bons at Christmas lunch –laughing can be so good for our wellbeing (*Camilla Kenny – Western LHD*)

To find a RAMHP Coordinator in your local area or find about RAMHP, visit ramhp.com.au or email ramhp@newcastle.edu.au

If you have any concerns about yourself or a loved one, please contact the NSW **Mental Health Line on 1800 011 511 (free call for landlines)**, the **Alcohol and Other Drugs Information Service (ADIS) 1800 422 599** or call **Lifeline on 13 11 14**.

For best practice guidelines on Mental Health and Suicide Reporting, visit: <http://www.mindframe-media.info/>

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