

Surviving Christmas when you're single

by eHarmony

Surviving Christmas when you're single can be tough, which is why we've compiled your go-to guide to getting through the festive season solo.

An eHarmony study last Christmas found that 47% of singles cited loneliness as the reason they dreaded Christmas. Additionally, the unmarried men we surveyed said that they found Christmas a more stressful time than Valentine's Day.

We're not saying every single person dreads Christmas – far from it. But as our survey shows, a large proportion of singles find surviving Christmas tough. Whether it's meeting up with old friends who are now in relationships, or negotiating nosy family members who ask, 'Haven't found anyone yet then?', being single during the festive season can feel more like a fight for survival than a joyful holiday.

But, rather than locking yourself away with leftover turkey and Morecambe and Wise repeats, here are a few tips for tackling December with confidence.

Don't wallow

This is the cardinal rule for surviving Christmas single – and in fact, the whole year round. If you wallow in your feelings of misery, you'll enter into a downward spiral. Misery breeds misery, and it pushes people away. How often have you walked into a party and thought, 'ooh, I'll talk to that miserable person over there'? We're guessing never.

We know that it's often easier said than done to banish those feelings of sadness – especially if you find yourself remembering last Christmas when things were better for you – but do try. As soon as you feel your mind wandering, distract yourself. Volunteer to do some cooking, call up a friend: just get your mind off that subject.

Gather round, one and all

If the prospect of walking into a gathering of family or friends without someone on your arm is wholly intimidating, fight that feeling. The fact is that people are paying far less attention to you than you think they are. Simply try to enjoy the company of friends and family you don't often see; after all, what's funnier than Aunt Margaret after a few too many sherries? If you really can't face it, coerce a friend into going with you – but take care, if you think all your attention will be spent making sure they're okay rather than socialising, it's a pointless exercise.

Fill your time

This goes hand in hand with 'Don't wallow'. If you've been single for a while, you'll probably be a dab hand at planning and filling your time. And that's no bad thing – how often do you hear

coupled friends moaning they can't go out because 'Rachel has promised to cook me dinner this evening'? Whereas you have no one else's calendar to worry about. Grab the festive season with both hands; attend parties, see old friends, visit Christmas markets and invite other single friends round for dinner.

Feel good about yourself

So, you've got some spare time on your hands. Why not volunteer for a charity, such as Crisis, over Christmas? Amazingly, some charities get over subscribed for volunteers on Christmas Day and Boxing Day, but there'll always be someone in need at some point over the festive season.

Don't be the only single person at the party

While you should stay social, try to avoid being the only single person at a party if you think it will bother you. Take a friend, or arrange to do something else. Of course, if you're happy to be around just couples then party away.

Come up with a good comeback for nosy relatives

If there's one thing to guarantee you regressing to being a sulky child, it's a nosy relative inquiring about your love life. Yes it's petty, but the fact is that when your smug distant cousin and his new wife are bearing down on you at a family gathering you'll do well to have some stock answers to their potentially prying questions. This can range from the genuine (I just haven't found the right person yet) to the flippant (I didn't fancy buying so many presents this year) – whatever you're comfortable with, just be prepared.

Look on the bright side

There are actually lots of bonuses to being single at Christmas – no agonising over presents for your partner, no stress over whose house to eat Christmas dinner at, being able to go to any party you want...the list goes on. Still feeling miserable? Remember that Christmas puts huge pressure on couples too, with 1.8million considering divorce over the period, according to the Family Mediation Helpline. Also remember that there is life after Christmas – after all, it is just a week and it'll soon be January. (And if the prospect of a cold and grey January doesn't persuade you to enjoy the moment, nothing will!)

Get away from it all

And, if you honestly can't face surviving Christmas at home, take the chance to be completely selfish and have a winter break. Relish your lack of responsibilities and spend a week lying on a beach, not sparing a thought for overeating and enforced jollity.