

# Why is Christmas Stressful?

## Break from Routine

- apartment looks different
- decorations stay up for too long
- routine things don't happen as much (like gaming, watching shows, making normal dinners)
- non-routine things happen too much (gift shopping, visiting, decorating, phone calls, wrapping, eating different foods, doing things at different times)
- I feel ungrounded on Christmas Day because I don't know what's happening and when
- not enough time at home
- too much busy yet unstructured time - the whole thing just lasts too long

## Sensory

- decorations take up a lot of visual and physical space, which makes me feel claustrophobic
- too many bright lights
- public areas are too busy and noisy (people talking, Salvation Army bells, music)
- too many "special" foods, which are often sweet and/or rich and make me feel sick
- too much food in general
- too much clutter in the apartment (wrapping supplies, bags of gifts, food)
- wrapping gifts is hard and frustrating due to lack of motor control
- too much time spent in public
- pure, saturated, bright green is very hard to look at
- the rustling sound of wrapping paper is aggravating
- too many hugs while visiting
- I have almost constant headaches around Christmas because of sensory and social stress
- weather is overstimulating
- it's too bright outside because of the snow
- it's too cold
- air is too dry
- winter clothes can often be uncomfortable (too puffy, too stiff, gloves between my fingers)
- there is nowhere to go that is Christmas-free

## Social

- buying gifts is difficult, tiring, and anxiety-inducing; I can't figure out what people want, or if they will like what I've bought. I also can't tell what is an appropriate amount to spend, and then I worry that I haven't spent enough. Gift shopping is not at all enjoyable.
- it is hard to hint about what I want as a gift, or answer questions directly about what I want - I simply don't know
- too much contact with people overall (to arrange visits, discuss things, or to chat)
- too much pressure to visit - I feel like I can't decline "because it's Christmas"
- too many visits in a short amount of time - I have no chance to recover
- each visit is loaded with expectation because it is a "Christmas visit". Living up to that expectation is either impossible or extremely taxing
- there is a lot of pressure to appear happy when I'm not (or to appear happy in a way that other people approve of), which is extremely draining
- Christmas visits have too much sensory stimulation (people talking loudly, rustling paper, music, visual chaos, lights, different food)
- there is a chance of other less familiar guests being there, so there is often simply too many people in the room
- opening gifts is stressful: people are often very loud about it, and I feel a lot of pressure to show energetic thankfulness (which is very draining). I also can't really tell if someone likes the gift I got them.
- writing cards takes a long time and a lot of energy
- visits are too long and unstructured
- more pressure than usual to not say something "offensive" (which doesn't seem offensive to me)
- pressure to sacrifice my enjoyment or well-being in order to give others a few hours of fun
- the stress of socializing stays with us even when we return home, which makes relaxing at home more difficult
- socializing and gift buying takes all of my energy, so I have none left to do things that I enjoy at home.

## Misc.

- too many things to remember to do (gifts to buy, visits to arrange, cards to write, food to buy)
- it's hard to keep up with cleaning because I'm too overloaded, and having a messy environment causes more stress
- I often feel physically ill because of the stress
- bus planning is difficult and often goes awry
- avoiding physical accidents (like falling on ice) is very difficult
- decorations are easy to break, and it takes a lot of energy to concentrate on not dropping them

- it's physically exhausting and hard on my back (lots of things to carry and move, lots of bending while decorating, lots of sitting in uncomfortable ways while wrapping and decorating)
- too many times when I "have to" do something, without an opportunity to decline