



Dear Deirdre...

I just dread the thought of Christmas: all the preparations, writing cards, choosing presents, keeping the children happy plus cooking for and entertaining my husband's family - for me it is a nightmare. I just want to run away and forget about it all!

Seasonally-stressed Susan from Summerlee

Dear Susan,

You're right, Christmas isn't always the most peaceful time - we often find ourselves with far too much to do and too little time to do it in. So... in order to be able to enjoy the festive season, here are six S. S. S. Suggestions!

- Start soon to Stretch the time to do everything. Buy presents way ahead - when you see a really good one, buy it there and then, even if it's only August! Get non-perishables well in advance: crackers, decorations, wrapping paper and so on. Cards too, and write them early.
- Sack Superwoman/Superman: Simplify. Don't be too ambitious or fussy. Do the family really need homemade trifle, zabaglione and petit fours to go with all that pudding and cake? How about some stress busting Satsumas instead? And talking of pudding and cake (and things like marzipan, chestnut stuffing etc), would it be a total disaster if you bought some ready-made for once?
- Seek help. You don't have to do everything yourself. Delegate whatever you can: buying the vegetables, cleaning the bathroom, decorating the tree, laying the table... Most people - guests or family, kids or grown-ups (even teenagers!) - like to feel useful, so you'll do everyone a favour by involving them.
- Strengthen your Stress reSistance. Some Simple Stressbusters:
 - Water ensures you function well both mentally and physically so drink plenty of it, (especially if you're dehydrating yourself with alcohol or rich food).
 - Get enough Vitamin C - stress depletes your immune system. Hence the stress busting Satsumas!
 - Apart from helping to counter the effects of too much turkey, exercise gets rid of tension, so make sure you get some every day. (But avoid post-pudding Twister!)
 - Remember to breathe deeply a few times daily (especially in moments of crisis) - it will help you relax.
- Stop Sometimes - make time for you. Plan yourself an occasional treat (alone or with partner or friend): a walk on the heath, a sortie to the sales, a cappuccino in the High Road? Or send them all out (to a panto, the Science Museum, Mme Tussaud's, the London Eye) and stay behind to splat out on the sofa and watch that video you've been meaning to.
- Speak Out. In spite of these strategies, there may still be a moment when you feel frazzled or overwhelmed. If you do, say so. Nicely - while you still can, "I'm sorry - I'm feeling a bit tense right now - I think I'll go for a walk around the block." Or whatever. Otherwise you may end up taking it out on your family, and feel guilty about that too - especially given that this is supposed to be a time of peace and goodwill!

Deirdre

The Dear Deirdre column is written by Jane Revell, therapist and stress management specialist. If you have a problem you think I can help you with, please write to Dear Deirdre at *THE ARCHER*. All replies will be treated in confidence.



Christmas can be one of the most stressful times of the year...

Tidings of Comfort & Joy

By Bob Janes

Do you know that the Christmas holiday is the busiest time of year for The Samaritans and the peak period for relationships to break up? In our pretty Victorian Christmas snow scenes we can see the trees covered in layers of glistening white, and in reality we know that many branches break under the burden. Somewhere, sometime, the weight builds up to the point when one more tiny snowflake is just too much. For a friend of ours the final snowflake was being asked to cut the Christmas cake.

The ideal Christmas of the past is often very different from our present-day Christmas. That illusory Christmas with the whole family singing carols joyfully around a candlelit tree while the snow falls gently outside the window (or whatever your personal version is) rarely happens for anyone anymore. We often try too hard to fill the gaps between the myth and the reality, and failure is almost inevitable.

In reality the pressures stack up: too much rich food and alcohol, not enough money or sleep; the family who choose not to come home for Christmas ... and the family who do; finding the right presents and being given the wrong ones; spending whole days with people we normally spend only a few hours with. Snowflake by snowflake, snowflake by snowflake, the weight builds up, the branch starts to bend. If it's already a little brittle it may snap soon, if it's still green and flexible it starts to bend invisibly under the weight. Snowflake by snowflake breaking point creeps closer until that last flake falls.

However much we may feel bent down under the pressure of our lives, we are not branches: we do have some choices left, however tiny they may seem, however hard they may be to find. And just the tiniest change can be enough to start the snow sliding off...

Rotary Club to sponsor school chess

By Daphne Chamberlain

Rotary Clubs throughout the UK are encouraging their local schools to start chess clubs. They believe that chess improves literacy, numeracy and concentration, as well as developing children's confidence. It can also be a very enjoyable hobby.

The Rotarians, who are groups of business and professional men and women, are sponsoring local and national chess tournaments, including the English Primary Schools Chess Association Competition.

Up the offensive

In some of these tournaments, children play against International Masters and Grandmasters. They are also hoping to build up the game in youth clubs and young offender institutions.

The plan is to establish local chess initiatives, which will be steering groups drawn from Education, Leisure Services, the police, chess experts and

Rotarians. As well as organizing tournaments, they will raise funds to buy sets, boards and trophies, and will find teachers and helpers.

Parames Biswas, from the Finchley Rotary Club, has already approached several Barnet schools, including Christ College, and is currently making contacts in East Finchley.

The chess initiative joins the Young Chef and Young Inventor competitions sponsored by Rotary (which have starred several young East Finchleyans). Mr Biswas told *The Archer* that a debating contest (Youth Speaks) is also in the pipeline.

East Finchley Baptist Church

Creighton Avenue (just off High Road) N2. Tel: 8883 5743

Christmas and New Year Services

December 17 Carol Services at 11 am (family) & 6.30 pm

December 24 Christmas Eve 11 am only

December 25 Christmas Day 10.30 am

December 31 - 11 am morning service and 8 pm buffet supper and fellowship to greet the New Year

January 7 - 124th Church Anniversary 11 am service followed by Church lunch and afternoon fellowship

Visitors always welcome

Special Notice

Log on & Listen in to

City Voice Internet Radio

<http://www.cityvoice.cjb.net>

Every Sunday at 11:45am

Rev Jim Patterson will present his message

live from the Finchley Elim Pentecostal Church, Salvation Army Hall, Hertford Road, East Finchley, N2.

Our Sunday morning Family service with facilities for children starts at 11:00am ~ Visitors will always be welcome



That Special Gift

Jane Revell (also known as Deirdre) has written 'Success Over Stress' full of practical self help hints for dealing with those tough times.

What better gift for the person who has everything? Or maybe even to tuck into your own Xmas stocking?



Watch out for Jane's Saturday signings at Chorak before Xmas.

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Smoke Alarm

By Martin Earl
Season's Greetings and don't forget to renew your smoke alarm batteries!

That's a message that we could all give to each other. Sub-officer Mitchener from the Finchley Fire Station told *The Archer* that they frequently attend fires where there is a smoke alarm that doesn't work because the battery has been taken out.

If you don't have a working smoke alarm the chances of surviving a fire when you are asleep are almost zero.

Alarms should be tested once a month and batteries renewed once a year. They cost between £6 and £8 for a pair, but even one is much better than none. The Fire Station in Long Lane welcomes visitors who would like advice on fire safety. At present the London Fire Service does not give out telephone numbers for advice from individual stations in case they are used for emergencies - a problem they need to solve if they are going to be more readily available for fire prevention work.

The Fire Service's current campaign up to Christmas is to remind us all to be very careful with our Christmas tree lights and candles.