

SINGLE SUGGESTIONS @ CHRISTMAS

Spare a thought this Christmas and Holiday Season for clients and/or family who live alone and/or fit the marital status of 'single'.

Whether widowed, divorced, clergy, religious Sisters, never married, homeless etc., people who are single do not comfortably fit the Christmas mould of 'family' – especially that promoted by the media.

Remember also people who are living in a family circumstance, but may be feeling psychologically alone, single, deserted or vulnerable.

Christmas is a time when the contented family unit of mother, father and child/children is proclaimed as the norm, creating a sense of displacement for many people who live singularly or feel alone. Individuals may be reminded of their own experience of loss – loss of family, spouse, children, parents, intimacy, love, identity, or the life they imagined. Regrets can take the place of Christmas celebration and people may feel out of place (or an 'add-on') at family gatherings as they watch each family unit within the extended family celebrate their own togetherness.

People who throughout the year embrace and celebrate their single life can suddenly feel uncomfortable and profoundly alone. They may crave, albeit momentarily, the connection and intimacy of family.

Some single people are experiencing their first Christmas alone and others have expended time and energy creating a Christmas experience to avoid feeling out of place.

Maslow (1943) clearly identified 'belongingness' as a fundamental human need. It is this need that can often create a sense of loneliness and superfluity at Christmas for single persons - whether at family gatherings, amidst the crowds at Christmas shopping forays, or anticipating and experiencing Christmas dinner in an aged care facility.

As professionals and people who care, please be aware of your own approach to family and friends this Christmas. Your gentle and discreet expressions of inclusiveness, kindness and understanding can make all the difference to someone's experience of Christmas!!!

Wishing you all a very special Christmas experience) **Trish Carroll, *Elder Matters***

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