



MEDIA RELEASE

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The best tips to avoid conflict this Christmas

At the time when festive cheer and celebrations should be at an all time high, Canberra based not-for-profit [Conflict Resolution Service](#) revealed today that the Christmas season can be anything but merry for many people, and provides the best tips to avoid conflict this Christmas.

“Sadly, Christmas can be a time of great stress for many people in our region. People can become stressed over the financial burden that Christmas time brings, and relationships that are already under tension for different reasons can also flare at this time of year,” said Melissa Haley, CEO, Conflict Resolution Service.

Previous studies by [Relationships Australia](#) have identified the Christmas period as a time when many experience anxiety and depression, and when emotions rise due to the loss of a loved one, family estrangement and divorce. Financial stress can arise from the costs of buying Christmas gifts and paying for holidays, and there is sometimes added strain from spending time with family members.

“The two biggest areas we see conflict in at this time of year are between families, and between neighbours. And yet, there are definitely some ways people can avoid conflict at Christmas time and take the stress levels down a notch,” Mel continued.

Mel says first and foremost that it is important to calmly and directly voice any concerns that you have, and to try and come to a peaceful resolution before affecting other people’s festive cheer.

“When it comes to family conflict at Christmas try and keep conversations light – it’s a festive time of year and most people want to use this time to relax and unwind. This time is a good opportunity to connect and check-in with each other.

“Allow for flexibility and expect variations in Christmas traditions to manage expectations. It can also be a great time to shift focus to what went well in this past year,” Mel continued.

Whether it’s a combination of over-stimulation and environmental factors, or just the stress of the season in general, Mel explained that neighbourhood disputes also increase at this time of year.

“When it comes to conflict with your neighbours at Christmas time, one of the main things we suggest is to keep in mind that it is party season and people need to give each other leeway during this time of year, after all it is the season for giving.

"We encourage people to take their own steps to try and resolve any family and neighbourhood differences. And for people to try and come to peaceful resolutions on their own before reporting issues to authorities," Mel concluded.

For more information on Conflict Resolution Service, go to www.crs.org.au or call (02) 6189 0590.

Top Tips for Family Conflict at Christmas

Keep conversations light:

- It's a festive time of year – teenagers and parents want to use this time to relax and unwind.
- The time spent together around Christmas is a good opportunity to connect and check-in with each other.

Allow for flexibility, or expect variations in Christmas traditions and expectations:

- At 13, little Johnny might not be as willing to have his photo taken with Santa.
- Work with your teenager to find ways that allow them to celebrate Christmas with both family and friends.

Focus on what went well in 2019:

- Talk with your kids and family members about what they all enjoyed most about their year and what they're hoping to get out of 2020.

Top Tips for Neighbourhood Conflict at Christmas

1. Decide what your needs or concerns may be regarding the situation. Also try to keep in mind that it is party season, so if you feel comfortable doing so, try to give your neighbours a little bit of leeway during this time of year... after all, this is the season for giving.
2. Don't assume the other person already knows there is a problem... in many cases, they won't.
3. If you feel comfortable doing so, calmly consult with your neighbours before you take any action that may negatively impact them. Explain the situation from your perspective and try not to make accusations.
4. Take the time to listen to your neighbour's side too – when people feel heard, they're more likely to work with you to find a resolution.
5. Try to work through possible solutions and be clear about the result of your conversation and what you have agreed on.
6. If your neighbour has ignored you and you feel there is nothing further you can do, contact the Conflict Resolution Service.

For more information, images or to arrange an interview, please contact:

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MEDIA BACKGROUNDER

Conflict Resolution Services

Is a not-for-profit organisation that has been supporting the Canberra region in dispute resolution services for 30 years.

Services include:

- Family dispute resolution.
- Community mediation.
- Crisis mediation to prevent youth homelessness.
- Conflict coaching for families and individuals.
- Community education.
- Workplace consultations, training and professional development for individuals and organisations.

More information at www.crs.org.au