

DOMESTIC ABUSE AND CHRISTMAS

Supporting Someone You Care About



Christmas can be a very difficult and stressful time of year for victims of domestic abuse and their families.

Many victims and their children may not even be able to see their families this year because they made the incredibly tough decision to flee their violent and abusive relationship and, for their own safety, are not able to return. The train strikes this year as well as heavy snow and the cost-of-living crisis has added additional barriers for those that may have had to leave their families and communities this year as well as the opportunity that their family may have had to visit them.

Christmas is also the time of year where alcohol is flowing and because it's winter, we are often inside the home far more than we would be in the summer. It's dark at 4pm and walking out of the home if a victim feels something is brewing is nearly impossible particularly with young children. We urge those living in perhaps an unpredictable, volatile home to have someone they are able to contact quickly if they need to. A safe word that they can use to let them know that they need help.

For those in a very controlling, coercive relationship, Christmas carries with it a number of dangers. The person delivering this kind of abuse in the home, doesn't need alcohol, they need to be and feel in control of the home. Keeping a façade up while others are around is challenging for our abuser, and once everyone else has left, then is the time they unleash that on their victim.

Their children and pets are likely to feel it brewing too. Our abuser will remember the minutest detail of the day, have issues with the presents that were bought, the amount everyone was drinking, who said what to whom, the dinner that they ate which wasn't up to standard, the mess that has been left behind, the children eating too much chocolate and being spoilt by other family members. Literally everything will have been a problem and somehow their victim will feel it's all their fault.

So don't just be thinking about a stereotypical potential abuser being someone who likes a drink and gets a bit loose with their words and fists, think too about a potential abuser who presents as the life and soul of the party in front of everyone. Notice their victim, notice their children, notice their pets. They won't be the life and soul of the party, they'll be anxious, nervous, on edge and desperately trying to foresee and plan for the night ahead.

Please think of them and keep your phone close by if they do reach out to you or knock on your door.

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Support & Safety Planning



- Have a trusted person you can speak to or contact if you feel things might escalate in your home.
- Have a safe word that you can quickly text or say if you are feeling things might be brewing.
- Try to keep your own intake of alcohol under control as this may impair your own ability to see things clearly and respond quickly.
- Have a quick escape route out of the home.
- Think about keeping a small emergency bag with essentials in with a trusted friend that you can access if you need to leave the home quickly.
- Always contact 999 if you feel in imminent danger, the Police are the only people that can respond quickly if you are at risk of harm.
- Access and become familiar with Alpha Vesta's list of Regional and National Support Services on our homepage. www.alphavesta.com. You could ask a trusted friend or work colleague to print this off for you to put in your emergency bag if you need to leave quickly over Christmas.

National 24hr Domestic Abuse Helpline (*for women*): 0808 2000 247

National Men's Advice Line (*for men*): 0808 8010 327

Essex COMPASS (*for those living in Essex*): 0330 333 7444