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Top tips for keeping your marriage on track during the Christmas

Penny Raby is co-founder of Marriage Makeover and says even the strongest relationships can come under pressure at Christmas.

Here are her top tips for keeping your cool at Christmas:

1 – Make it fun for everyone. After all, that's the whole point of Christmas.

"Make sure everyone's involved. Give them all a fun job to do, whether it's decorating the tree, making mince pies or organising the games you're going to play," says Penny. "That way everyone gets a chance to do things they enjoy - including mum."

2 – Don't expect perfection. Be realistic and realise that Christmas rarely goes without a single hitch –hiccups can even *make* Christmas according to Penny:

"Some of the best Christmas moments are when things go wrong – you'll be talking about the day dad forgot to switch the oven on for years to come!"

3 – Keep it real. Be prepared to spend time apart like you do in your everyday lives. There are no rules that say you should spend every moment of Christmas together.

"Doing different activities gives you a break and something new to talk to your partner and children about," she suggests.

4 – Be prepared. A little practical preparation goes a long way.

"Make your Christmas plans well in advance of the big day to avoid extra stress. There's nothing worse than a crisis to put extra pressure on a relationship," advises Penny.

"And don't forget to cheat – Marks and Spencer do some wonderful pre-prepared Christmas food to make life easier!"

5 - Be careful what you wish for. Don't feel you have to spend huge amounts of time and money on expensive presents or big parties for people you hardly know and care less about.

Focus your Christmas preparations on your nearest and dearest – that will help make Christmas more relaxed and enjoyable for everyone because there's less pressure," advises Penny.

Further information on Marriage Makeover can be found at www.marriagemakeover.co.uk

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Press contacts: Kinetic Communications 0121 212 6250
Angela Podmore 07786 934935
Claire Barker 07710 889049