

The phrase that will chill you out: 'hippo time'

According to relationships guru Paul McGee, author of *S.U.M.O Your Relationships: How To Handle Not Strangle The People You Live And Work With* (\$32.95, John Wiley & Sons), the key to surviving Christmas with your sanity intact is to factor in me-time.

"Hippos don't just go into mud or water to wallow, they go to get out of the heat. And you need to do the same – build you some time outside of all the stresses to give yourself a chance to unwind and find both balance and clarity," he explains.

Thirty minutes a day should do it – even if all you do is spend that time in the bath.

The colour to wear: red

So, you're determined to get at least one pash at the Christmas party this year? Wear something scarlet. Researcher Dr Andrew Elliot, from the University of Rochester in the US, has found it's the colour men find sexiest. Attached? Elliot also found it makes your man want to spend more money on you!

The number to remember: 370 grams

Forget the 2kg myth, a tiny 370g is the typical amount of weight the average person gains over Christmas, say researchers in *The New England Journal Of Medicine*.

"Knowing that is incredibly empowering," says Glenn Mackintosh, weight management psychologist at Wesley Weight Management Clinic (www.wesweight.com.au).

"It helps you to realise weight gain isn't inevitable and that by making the right choices over the holidays, you can avoid it."

Mackintosh suggests picking a few days to really enjoy yourself, but being sensible the rest of the time.

"One way to keep motivated is to really notice how good you feel when you come home from an event knowing you made the choices you wanted to make, rather than getting caught up in the situation," he says. "Then compare it to the negative feelings you have when you don't."

Chances are you'll realise that extra chocolate isn't worth it.



OK, who put asparagus in here?

The shyness fighter to try: face spotting

Got to go to the office party solo? No drama. According to Dr Jerry Epstein, a New York-based expert who studies the theory of face reading, "Round features – like wide eyes, full lips and plump cheeks – signify a welcoming, friendly person who'll be happy to chat to you", making you feel like a social success.

People with angular features tend to be less approachable, so you may want to save talking to them until later in the evening.

The two words that could save Christmas Day: 'I feel'

If you'd settle for weight gain and hangovers in return for getting through Christmas without a family fight, psychologist Dr Rachel Hannam from Assure Programs

(www.assureprograms.com.au) has some timely advice.

"Christmas can be very stressful as we tend to default into old roles and old arguments. The best rule? If you can let something slide then do – Christmas is not the time to try resolving big issues."

If, however, your day is going to be ruined if you don't say something, at least start your complaint with "I feel..." rather than words that focus on the other person, such as, "You're upsetting me".

This stops you blaming, shaming or criticising the other person, which is a recipe for conflict. Then end whatever you say with something positive, like: "I'm sorry but I really want this to be a nice day." That shows you don't want to fight.

Fingers crossed that, by then, neither does Auntie Edna! ■