

Mrs Dowdell's Parenting Pointers

Last Christmas



Christmas is a funny old time. So much joy and excitement on the surface but often pain and disappointment underneath. Life always has tricky seasons and when they coincide with Christmas, they feel all the more emotive. I know that some of you are facing difficult times now and I think it's good to remind ourselves that not everyone experiences a carefree festive season. I want to use my last

article of 2023 to share a bit of my experiences last Christmas and how kindness helped me through.

This time last year, I had just had 11 hours of surgery and was in the high dependency unit at the hospital. The build up to Christmas had been very strange as we weren't sure of the dates for my operation until a few days before, but we made the best of things and tried to do some Christmassy bits whilst avoiding picking up all the winter bugs that were doing the rounds.

By the time Christmas arrived I was beginning to feel a bit better and was on a normal hospital ward. On Christmas Eve, two members of staff who had already been on duty for almost 12 hours started playing some Christmassy tunes and encouraged the more mobile patients to have a little dance with them. Their kindness and enthusiasm brought smiles to the faces of those of us who watched.

It was very strange to wake up on Christmas morning without my family but again the staff were kind and cheerful, wishing us a Merry Christmas as they did their early morning rounds. I had a few little presents to open from my stocking and then I was able to watch the Christmas Day service at my church online. Our family (all grown up) do Secret Santa presents for each other and we were able to coordinate a video call, despite different time zones. My eldest and her boyfriend joined in from Taiwan, the rest of the family at our house and me from my hospital bed. It was fun to watch everyone open their presents and there was lots of laughter.



After this, my husband and younger two daughters came to visit me, leaving the son-in-laws behind to cook Christmas dinner! I was able to hobble down to the coffee shop at the front of the hospital and had a happy time opening more presents and being with my family. I received a very cool pair of new boots which I modelled in my dressing gown and surgical stockings! Quite a look! It was warm for December, so we went outside for photos by the Christmas tree. Once my family had returned home, I was able to enjoy my hospital Christmas dinner and to reflect on the day and how lucky I was to still be here.

This year feels very strange and very special. A mixture of traumatic experiences along with precious memories of the wonderful people who took care of me. Christmas will always be overlaid with memories of last year but we are planning to make some new memories too. Our daughter in Taiwan will be with us this year and then we have a very special family holiday to look forward to over the New Year. Whatever circumstances you and your family find yourselves in this year, I'd like to wish you a peaceful and joyful Christmas ... and be kind to each other! xxx