Like many support services, Twenty10 is closed over the Christmas/NYE break. We thought it’d be useful to put together a little zine of things to think about, ideas & resources that might come in handy when trying to navigate this time of year.

Some thoughts about coping with some of the hard stuff that this time of year brings up, and to make a list of free activities (e.g. free food) that are happening in Sydney that are not necessarily family or church based.
SOME POTENTIAL STRATEGIES & THINGS TO DO:

1. Don’t Swallow the Hype
This is about being aware that stores, shopping centres, TV, internet and radio advertisements turn this time of year into a merchandising cash cow – they work hard to sell a certain idea of what the silly season is about and what it should be. I’m sure you’re well aware that the holidays aren’t about gorgeous decorations, happy families and expensive gifts.

The dominant story is packaged up in this really narrow Judaeo-Christian, capitalist framework (in that it is only one religion’s perspective that pushes out all other spiritual and belief systems). There is a lot of pressure to live the story and can often lead to unrealistic expectations.

So, it’s about being aware that the world at this time of year is focussed on a certain image & expectations about the things people should do. Just like all other sweeping generalisations, Christmas and other end-of-year holidays have special meaning for some folks, but not for everyone. With this knowledge, take a moment to reflect: What is important for you at this time of year? What meaning do you attach to it?

It’s ok if you don’t want to participate in Christmas! You’re not a bad person and you’re certainly not alone! For many of us the things represented by the holiday period are emotional, painful and triggering. For many of us the silly season is a fun time, not awful at all. People have all kinds of ways of interacting with family and the traditions behind the holiday.

2. Stay Active
Getting enough exercise, oxygen, and fresh air are really simple and (for some) pretty easy things to do. Getting out of your bedroom, and even the house is a great thing to achieve.

It might simply be spending time in a different part of the house, or rearranging things. Depending on your energy, it could be travelling home by a new way, or going to the shops in the next suburb over. It might be about going on an exploring mission – to some bushland (the National
Google Maps is an excellent place to start checking things out!

It’s summer and the beach is great, but think about sun cream, hats & taking water. Also think about the fact that often many other people and families have had the same idea as you. So if you’re feeling anxious or triggered by family stuff this time of year, safety plans and back-ups are really useful too.

3. Start New Traditions
If Christmas (or another end-of-year holiday) just isn’t relevant to you perhaps starting your own tradition is something useful. If you find that many of your friends also feel alienated or freaked out by Christmas, maybe it’s about starting an annual event that supports and acknowledges that this is often a really hard time.

It may be a hang out in the park, dinner, a trip to the movies, or visiting somewhere exciting and adventuresome. It might be taking time before (to inspire strength & courage) or after (to debrief and process) Christmas to hang-out with your close friends....

4. Be Aware of Your Family’s Dynamics
Ironically, your family and friends may be the source of your holiday blues. You may not be able to change your family’s dynamics, but at least be aware of how your family and friends affect you. Sometimes surviving Christmas can be about finding ways to shorten or eliminate the experiences that make you feel bad. Consider taking some “me time” breaks during family time to spend with yourself doing the things you enjoy. Connecting with people, or places that are comforting and nurturing during the Christmas time is helpful, be that in person, over the phone or online.

5. Make A Plan
If Christmas is a hard time, maybe making a plan of what you’ll do on the day & the public holidays afterwards can be a good addition to your coping strategies. This might mean taking to time to talk w/your Counsellor or Case Manager before the holiday to make a plan. It might be about tracking down a Youth Worker, trusted person, friend or family ally to do that with.
5 Ways to Face Race at the Christmas Table—and Not Choke

That awkward moment when your uncle pipes up with a racist rant at holiday dinner doesn't have to be so hard. Here's how to take control of the conversation and make it productive, without ruining everybody's appetite. This article by Terry Keleher, who is a writer at http://www.colorlines.com/ (an amazing social justice website in the US), was about the Thanksgiving table, but we've adapted it for the Christmas table. While it talks about race specifically, these tips can be applied to all kinds of other things that get said over Christmas and all kinds of other occasions.

One of the golden rules of etiquette is to avoid talking in polite company about politics, sex or religion. Some also add money. And a lot of people would love to add race to the very top of their taboo topic list.

The problem with the rules of etiquette is that the ruling elite wrote them. Indeed, so much of their privilege hinges on the politics of race, religion and sex/gender and the ways these connect with money and profit. So from their perspective, silence is soothing. Colour-blindness is blissful. Avoidance is virtuous.

But if you identify with the ubiquitous 99 percent, you've probably come to realize that you're not well served by all the silence. In fact, this Christmas, you may actually want to ruffle a few feathers. Or at least, not let anyone ruffle yours and get away with it.

So it's time to rewrite the rules of etiquette for talking about race at the Christmas dinner table. Here's a five-course menu to whet your appetite for turning the dreaded silence into some delicious conversation.

1. Talk turkey

"Talking turkey" means "talking plainly about a difficult or awkward subject." Resist the treatise on the prison-industrial-complex or the full-blown critique of global capitalism and structural racism. Lose the jargon
or you'll lose your audience. Instead, look for the softer entry points—a current event, a recent experience, a local development.

Instead of just being reactive, why not be proactive? Start with a question. Use plain language. Set the frame and tone you want. Create an opening for some constructive dialogue. For example, "Did you see that video of the police cracking down on the non-violent student protesters?" Or, "What do you think of the plans to shut down the neighbourhood health clinic that serves mostly low-income people of colour?"

2. Go easy on the stuffing

Make sure your ears aren't too stuffed up to listen well. And don't get too full of yourself. Be open to learning, because there actually are many valid perspectives. When you take the time to truly understand where someone is coming from, you'll be far more equipped to make a difference in where the person is going. It's OK to debate, but keep it constructive and don't personalise things. Use "I" statements (about your own experiences and perspectives) rather than "You" statements (which sound accusatory). Focus on actions and impacts (which are concrete and knowable) rather than attitudes and intentions.

3. Take a roll with the mashed potatoes

When the rabid right-winger just can't resist his racist rant, roll with it. You don't have to take the bait. Talk on your own terms—when, how, and with whom you want. Not everything and everyone is worth your time. For every close-minded racist, there are 10-times more people who'd rather be on the side of racial justice. They may not have a clue about what to do, but may be quite willing to entertain your constructive and productive suggestions. They're the ones worth your time and energy.

That doesn't mean letting racist remarks slide. You can call those out clearly and quickly. When your resident ranter pours it on thick, take a deep breath. Don't take it personally or defensively or you'll only be an accomplice in this set-up for disaster. After another deep breath, make a thoughtful choice about how you can spend your energy initiating the kinds of conversations you want to have.
4. Go for the gravy

Sometimes the gravy makes the meal, providing the perfect complement to some delectable combinations. What's the gravy you can add to the conversation? Instead of the typical race talk focused on blaming and shaming, and guilt tripping and grievances, how can you take things in a different direction? Can you move beyond the personal to talk about the patterns of inequality? Can you get beyond the symptoms to reveal the underlying system? Can you create connections across different concerns and communities so others can see their stake in social change? Can you appeal to shared values such as inclusion, equity, dignity, unity and love? Can you lift energy around a vision of racial, gender and economic justice for everyone?

5. Keep your eye on the pies, or in this case, pudding

The point of talking about race at the Christmas table isn't actually to ruffle feathers, as tempting as that may be. The real point is to get others to see, act and think differently. But that's only gonna happen if you're willing to nurture and sustain good relationships with those you care about most. It's a tall order, but for those who are going to be in your life a long time, it's worth the special care and feeding that each person may need. That can take some real finessing. Like preparing a memorable meal, it requires generous heapings of patience and creativity. But the delicious results may give you something about which you can truly be thankful.

STAYING SAFE AT CHRISTMAS & NYE PARTY TIME

The Christmas & New Year’s season is a time of lots of parties & lots of expectation to party. It's useful to take some time to consider your party options: Consider how you’re feeling at the moment, what are the ways to deal with hard times? Is a party & lots of people ok for you? Is drinking, using other drugs, or being around intoxicated folks good for you? Do you know the people you’re partying with? If you’re going out on the scene (or anywhere), here are a few things you can do to help you and your friends stay safe.

Be aware of drink spiking – always watch the bartender mix your drink (even if someone else is buying it for you) and never leave your drink unattended.
Be aware of how much you’re drinking/taking, how, and what you’re taking. If someone is offering you drugs, consider why they want to do this and perhaps what they may do if you became wasted. If you have questions about drugs, their effects and what may happen when you take more than one drug at a time, you can talk to a Youth Worker or check www.reachout.com. If you have questions about a friend or family member’s drug use, you can call the Family Drug Support Help Line 1300 368 186 (24 Hrs).

If you see someone who appears to be ill from alcohol and/or other drug use, get help immediately by contacting staff or calling for an ambulance. They’re trained to help in these situations, not dob.

Be aware of homophobia/transphobia when you’re out on the street & in clubs. Communicate with pals where you are and what your plans are. If you’re moving between venues, try not to do so alone - get some friends to come with you.

Be aware of safe sex practices and how to effectively negotiate these with your sexual partner/s - check out the relevant Sex + Sexual Health resources (i.e. www.ACON.org.au). Be aware that your ability to get consent from a partner for sex is greatly reduced when intoxicated.

Taking care of your health is important, but so is knowing what you’re allowed to do: Fair Play is a website to inform, support and educate members of the LGBTIQ community on health, safety and rights issues when attending Mardi Gras events, particularly where police drug operations occur. While it focuses on Mardi Gras, the info is relevant for any kind of partying you do and what your rights are on the scene http://www.fair-play.org.au/about/
FIVE TIPS FOR TAKING CARE OF YOUR TRANS SELF DURING THE HOLIDAYS

Many of us will spend the holidays with folks who either don’t know much about, or don’t respect, our chosen identities. This might mean spending time with folks who call you by the wrong name, who use pronouns that don’t fit you, or who expect you to be a person that you aren’t. It also might mean hearing people be unkind or abusive about your sexuality or gender, whether or not you have invited those folks into that part of your life. This is especially true this year, when sex and gender diverse people and their lives have been made into topics of debate by politics and the media.

At this time of year, with lots of support services shut and schools closed for the summer, it can be really easy to feel disconnected from the stuff that usually validates and celebrates you, your gender and your sexuality. Sometimes, the gross, ignorant or hateful stuff that gets said by family members can start to seep into the ways that we see and feel about ourselves. Sometimes, it’s even more hurtful because this stuff is said by people who we love, and who love us.

In order to combat some of these issues, we’ve come up with these ten handy tips for protecting yourself from uncomfortable interactions through the holidays. It’s a bit of a mixed bag—some of it might really work for you, some might not, and some might need a bit of tweaking to work properly. Hopefully, though, with the right set of tools, we can make family holidays a little bit more survivable.

1. **Safety First**

Often, when we hear our identities being talked about, we get to feeling pretty angry. It can be super easy to respond to a drunk uncle being homophobic by outing ourselves in order to challenge their messed up beliefs—like, “Listen here, Uncle Fred, I’m gay and…”

Sometimes, these kinds of revelations are really effective in challenging homophobia—but sometimes, this kind of thing can compromise your safety, stability and maybe even connections to family that you might
value. This is definitely not to say that you shouldn’t invite family into your sexual identity or your gender identity, but it does mean that you definitely don’t owe anyone that information. You are entitled to bring people into your gender identity or sexuality whenever this feels safe and good for you personally, and you definitely don’t have to sacrifice yourself for some cis/hetero family member’s enlightenment.

Your safety is much, much more important than your uncle’s rantings. If you would like to challenge that rant, some alternative ways to do that might be to speak in generalities, or to use some statistics (“Actually Uncle Fred, statistics tell us that children raised by same-gender parents are more likely to be healthy, happy and well-adjusted”).

2. Phone A Friend

Sometimes, the hardest part of the holidays is being away from friends who affirm our gender and/or sexuality—whether that’s because you’re on school holidays or stuck on a family road trip. If you know you’re going to be surrounded by family who don’t affirm your gender and sexuality, it can be helpful to enlist a friend or two to be your emergency contacts—people who can send you messages of support when other people’s takes on your sexuality and/or gender are getting exhausting and/or infuriating.

Come up with a code-word or emoji bat signal that could let your friends know you’re in need of some LGBT TLC. Think about some ways that friends could help affirm you long distance—by calling you your chosen name, using your correct pronouns, or by sending you pictures of you folks looking amazingly, perfectly gendered.

One thing to consider with this tip is whether you’re likely to be crammed in the backseat with a snooping sibling, or whether a parent is likely to check out the contents of your phone. For lots of different reasons, you might feel a little uncomfortable about calling a friend—or it might be really tricky to identify someone you could be super vulnerable with in this stressful time. If this is the case, QLife will be open over the holidays from 3pm to midnight every day over the Christmas and new year period. You can call them on 1800 184 527, or find their online chat by heading to qlife.org.au.
3. **Note To Self**

Sometimes the best affirmations are the ones we give ourselves. If you feel like you might need a reminder to be gentle with yourself over the holidays, one option might be to write yourself a note that reassures you, reminds you, or otherwise might help protect you from stressful situations.

This could be a “You Are Lisa Simpson” style note that reinforces your correct name and pronouns, but it might also be a little note about how excellent/clever.brave/gay. you are, that there are people who love you, or that this holiday season will end and you will get to back to your regular life. It might be helpful to reflect on how you’ve felt at similar family events in the past, or even what kind words you might offer to a friend if they were going to experience the same thing.

4. **Use Your Resources**

Is there a YouTuber you really resonate with? Music you love? Hilarious memes about gender? A podcast that really helps you out? Whether it’s a book, spoken word poetry, or an app on your phone, lots of us have spent time collecting things that make us feel more comfortable in our own bodies.

Some ways to protect ourselves over the holidays might be to make a Youtube or Spotify playlist, line up a bunch of podcasts, collect a few good books—make sure you have a whole collection of things that make you feel good and comfortable in your sexuality and/or gender. This stuff can be really helpful in reminding us not only that we are excellent, but also that there is a whole world outside of Aunt Meg’s Christmas lunch that understands our gender and sexuality and embraces them.

However, keep in mind that “What are you watching/reading/listening to?” and “Get off your dang phone!” are some folks’ family members’ favourite phases. Making sure your books have inconspicuous covers and titles (meaning that it might not be the right time to begin the timeless classic *the Joys of Gay Sex*) and thinking about some safe ways to describe the your favourite trans podcasts might be helpful if you feel like it might be unsafe or uncomfortable for your family to know what you’re really up to.
Family gatherings might see you in clothes that feel uncomfortably distant from your usual gender presentation or with a gender that resonates with you. Of course, it’s excellent for you if you feel perfectly comfortable being your fabulous genderqueer self at every family event, but for some people, verbal or non-verbal pressure from family, cultural expectations, or safety concerns can make wearing the clothes we’d really like to wear over the holiday period completely impossible.

Sometimes cis drag really is the best option—and of course, your gender identity is real and valid and important regardless of the clothes you’re wearing. But if cis drag is getting you down, or making you feel less than at home in your own body, one strategy can be to wear something super gender affirming that’s either hidden or less than noticeable.

This might be the underwear you feel works best for you, a cool watch that reminds you of better times (and outfits), a few jelly bracelets, a small earring (or two)—little things that might not be eye catching, but that you can look at or think about when other people’s reading of your gender starts to weigh you down.
THINGS THAT ARE ON: All listed events are free!

Christmas-type things:

**Gay and Lesbian Community Christmas Eve Service**
The annual Gay and Lesbian Christmas Eve service hosted by Metropolitan Community Church  
When: 24 December 2017 8:00 PM  
Where: Sydney Town Hall, 483 George St.  
For more information: [https://www.mccsydney.org/ces2017](https://www.mccsydney.org/ces2017)

**Carols by the Sydney Gay and Lesbian choir**
Join in song with the Sydney Gay & Lesbian Choir Christmas carols  
When: 21 December 2017 6:00pm  
Where: Pitt Street Mall  
For more information:  

**Lights of Christmas**
It’s like Vivid, but for Christmas at St Mary’s Cathedral for the 2017 festive season.  
When: Every day, 7.30pm to 12am, starting Wednesday 8th December to Monday 25th December  
Where: St Mary’s Cathedral Square, College Street, Sydney  
For more information:  

**Martin Place Christmas Tree**
Everything starts on Saturday 25th November with the lighting and a concert. Each day thereafter will have a light show and carols, running through until Sunday 24th December. You can also send a message to be displayed on the tree at [https://www.sydxmastree.com.au/](https://www.sydxmastree.com.au/).  
When: Light Show 8.30 to 9.15pm every day  
When: Carols 6pm to 8pm every day  
Where: Martin Place, Sydney  
For more information:  
**Giant Gingerbread Train**

Giant gingerbread train? Why not? Come see this modern marvel of engineering and good bakes that combines 1000 kilos of gingerbread bricks, 500 kilos of lollies, 100 kilos of fondant, 200 lollipops and liberal lashings of icing.

**When:** Every day from Friday 1 December to Sunday 31 December, 7:00am – 11:00pm  
**Where:** Shangri-La Hotel, 176 Cumberland St, Sydney  
For more information:  

**Non-Christmas Type Things:**

**The Museum of Contemporary Art**

It’s at Circular Quay Sydney and has a range of exhibitions which are free and always changing. Check out their website for current exhibitions.


**Parramatta reserve walks**

The entrance to the reserve is from Lackey Street, off Bourke Street in North Parramatta. There are a number of formal tracks which form a circuit around the edge of the lake which was originally the water supply for Parramatta.


**Bondi coastal walks**

Start at Bondi beach and walk along the coast to Bronte, Gordons bay, Clovelly and as far as Coogee. For directions see  

**Free things to do in Manly**

Check out beach activities, walks or see penguins!  
Sydney Olympic Park
There’s heaps to do from bird watching to walks to art displays. Sydney Olympic Park is home to the largest collection of outdoor large-scale site-specific urban art in a single precinct in Australia with more than 50 pieces.
Search for free activities at:

Many events in Sydney
There’s just too much to list! There’s a whole range of fun, interesting, strange, exciting stuff posted here:
http://whatson.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/ from art exhibitions, markets, events, talks, community events & much more! Search “free” when you’re on the site!

Christmas Lunch

The Haymarket Centre
Thursday 14 December, 11:00am – 2:00pm  
137-139 Regent St, Chippendale
https://haymarket.org.au/

The Wayside Chapel
Annual Christmas Day Street Party

The Exodus Foundation
Exodus Christmas Lunch

The Station
Boxing Day Lunch
82 Erskine Street, Cnr Clarence & Erskine Sydney
Tuesday 26 December 12:30pm
http://thestationltd.org/
Call 9299 2252 for more information
RESOURCES, NUMBERS AND WEBSITES

For information on services open over the break + those services offering free Christmas Lunch and hampers etc... Check: http://www.newtowncentre.org/ and http://www.jnc.org.au/

QLife - 1800 184 527 or https://qlife.org.au/ for online chat
Telephone Counselling and Information Line operates 7 days from 3pm - midnight (Includes Christmas Day!)

Lifeline - 13 11 14
Telephone counselling 24-hour a day, any day of the week from anywhere in Australia.

Family Drug Support Help Line - 1300 368 186 (24 Hrs).
Telephone counselling offering support for people who have family with a drug dependency issue.

Kids Helpline - 1800 55 1800

Reachout - http://au.reachout.com/
Provides young people with the information, help, support, advice and connections they need to manage mental health difficulties

Youth BeyondBlue - https://www.youthbeyondblue.com/
Online resources/support around anxiety & depression.

ICLC (Inner City Legal Centre) - https://twitter.com/iclc
Is a non-profit community-based legal centre that provides specialist Gay & Lesbian legal advice, as well as specialist Transgender legal advice. You can call them on 02) 9332 1966

Link2Home (Emergency Accommodation Line) - 1800 152 152
Call centre with information on emergency accommodation options for you, they can make referrals and organise a place to stay.