

At home with Coleen

Best joins presenter Coleen Nolan as she prepares for Christmas with all her family

Christmas really is magical for me. I love it – I always have and I always will. Ever since I was a little girl, it has been the most important time of the year, and I enjoy keeping that feeling going for my kids.

When I was growing up, we were a big family and we were very poor. However, my mum and dad put everything into giving us a great day. For me, it shouldn't be about how much something costs. It's about the thought behind it. If you care for someone they'll always love what you get them.

I'm not one of those people who want to get away at Christmas, and to fly off somewhere hot or relax on a beach. One of my worst Christmases was when we had started singing as The Nolans. We were performing in Indonesia, and



I hated every minute of it. It was hot, and it just didn't feel festive at all. Since then, I've always wanted to stay at home and have the whole family round. The only Christmas destination I might consider would be New York, but we'd have to be guaranteed snow!

This year, we've got all the family coming, so there will be me, my husband Ray, Ciara, and my two boys, Shane and Jake. Ciara is 10 now and she loves decorating the tree with me. Then, on Christmas Eve, she picks a film – it has to be a Christmassy one – and we light the fire and all watch it together. Then we get the kids off to bed and wait for Santa to come.

Ray and the boys tease me because I'm always the first one downstairs on Christmas Day – I'm up about two hours before anyone else and I shout, 'He's been, Santa's been.' The boys just look at me like I'm an idiot!

It really hits home when we can't be together. A couple of years ago, the boys were with their dad, my ex-husband Shane Richie, while he was doing panto. I hated every minute of it. It didn't feel right not to have the boys here.

Separation is so hard at Christmas, but I realise a lot of families have to cope with it. It's a sign of the times. I'm very lucky that most years we're all together. Family is everything to me, and Christmas is a time for families.

I've had such a busy year, presenting in *The Hub* and leaving *Loose Women* after 11 years, so it will be nice to spend some quality time with Ray. He's been touring with the likes of Rick Astley and Kim



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Wilde, so we've not been together as much. It's important to keep the sparkle in a relationship. We have our peaks and troughs like any couple, but if we have a row one week, we'll be madly in love again the week after. When Ray first started touring, I felt incredibly insecure, but he said to me, 'I'm not your ex-husband. I'm not Shane.' Then I realised I had been being silly. Sometimes I just need a kick up the bum!

It sounds corny, but it really is true that every day I feel so lucky to have a healthy, happy family, and to have a job I love. Happy Christmas, everyone!

Photo shoot insider Behind the scenes with Best

- Coleen loves this time of year so much she had Michael Bublé's Christmas CD on repeat during our photo shoot.
- The star doesn't drink, but makes an exception at Christmas, pouring the odd Malibu and coke.
- Her favourite Christmas present was a Tippy Tumbles from when she was a kid.
- Coleen buys gifts for all her close relatives. She's from a family of eight, and they all have kids, so that's a lot of presents! But however big the family grows, Coleen gets something for everyone.