



Single or not, Anthea Turner asks which of us can honestly say we've never had a 'bloody miserable Christmas...?'

Bridget Jones? I know how she feels!

Dressing in Bridget Jones-style penguin pyjamas and singing *All By Myself* into a Christmas cracker, Anthea Turner proves once again – contrary to belief – that she has an incredibly good sense of humour about herself.

'I'm a BIG fan of Bridget Jones. Who doesn't love her? Absolutely, what a great film,' she grins.

'As for being like her... a night in wearing your jarmies, drinking red wine and watching anything with a happy ending is just as important as eating a Terry's Chocolate Orange or the orange chocs out of the Quality Street box, in my book.

'Now THAT makes me happy. I can't wait for the next Bridget Jones instalment.'

Asked how she feels about spending Christmas newly single (she divorced her hubby of 15 years, Grant Bovey, in October) or, as Bridget herself would call it, as a 'spinster', Anthea throws her eyes skywards.

'Oh, COME ON!' she chides. "Show me one woman in her fifties who hasn't had at least one bloody awful Christmas?"

'I think it's something to do with "Great Expectations" – the TV ads, the magazines – everyone shouting at you, "Have a good Christmas. What are you doing for Christmas? Happy Holidays."

'And we do all try, and we do all want the perfect day – let's be honest, I even wrote a book called *The Perfect Christmas* – but unfortunately, at different points in our lives, it's just not consistent.

'Let's face it, for some people it just won't be nice. Maybe you've

just got a divorce, maybe you just lost your job, maybe you're ill or on your own – these things are always bad. But Christmas just puts any cracks in the mirror under a magnifying glass, and you think, "I'm a big fat loser!"

'Last year was a particularly bad Christmas for me. It was the first one I'd spent on my own. I remember being in Waitrose with my trolley and I cried.

'I called my sister Wendy, sobbing down the phone, "I don't want it to be Christmas. I just don't want to



'We all want the perfect day but sometimes it just doesn't work out like that'

**TURN
OVER FOR
MORE...**

'Will I be doing a Bridget, singing All By Myself into a cracker?'



'Christmas puts any cracks under the magnifying glass'



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do this." So yes, I went home and did a Bridget Jones. I opened the wine! But you get through it, don't you?"

And Anthea is never a woman to feel sorry for herself for long.

'Don't make me out to be some sad case, for goodness' sake!' she warns. She then cites statistics from the Samaritans, which has a 17 per cent increase in calls on Christmas Day, and talks about the 100,000 children who, according to Shelter, will be homeless across Britain on the big day - the equivalent of four children for every school in the UK.

'So, as for me having the odd rubbish day, show me the woman who hasn't?'

'Why are we such a bunch of Mary Martyrs? We take it all on, don't we?'

The decorations, the cards [although, in keeping with her newly single status, Anthea is no longer sending out 200-plus family cards], the shopping, the wrapping, the cooking...!

"I have 100 per cent absolutely done those Christmases. One year, I had TWO dishwashers on constantly! I was exhausted. Grant kept thanking me for a lovely day, and inside I was fuming, "Of course you've had a lovely day. All you've done is serve the drinks!"

So why do we do it to ourselves?

'Honestly, I don't know. We are the arbiters of our own destruction. None of us should be stupid enough to make our own cranberry sauce. Life is too short! All that time measuring bloody cranberries and sugar...'

Then Anthea pauses. 'It's hateful to generalise but, if it was up to men, I don't think Baby Jesus' birthday would happen. At best, it would consist of a full English breakfast, then straight down the pub.'

'As for Christmas cards - 54p for a second-class stamp? Men would just never send a card. They'd be thinking: "This is all getting too much now!"'

Anthea starts laughing again. 'Still, it brings it all into perspective, doesn't it?'

And, as with most of us, not all her Christmas memories are bad - in fact, some, she goes as far to say, were magical.

"One year, Grant and I took the three girls (her stepdaughters, Lily, now 23, Amelia, 22, and Claudia, 19) to Lapland for three days. Claudia was seven at the time and it was brilliant,' she recalls with sparkling eyes.

'Claudia met Santa and all doubt of his existence was removed. To be honest, I came back believing in Santa, never mind Claudia.'

So, has the 'Perfect Housewife' picked up any tips over the years for making Christmas easier - apart from not bothering to make her own cranberry sauce?

'Yes! My mum has a brilliant one. She always asks her guests to bring something. Don't be afraid to accept offers of help. Don't insist that "It's all under control." Say, "Thank you. You bring mince pies, you bring pudding." Even your nephew Alfie can bring the After Eights.

'The first rule of management is delegation - so delegate. That is actually the way to do it.'

So, how will Anthea be spending this Christmas? All by herself in red PJs, watching slushy romcoms?

'Too early to say,' she laughs.

'Maybe I will go for a jarmie lock-in with girlfriends and an M&S ready-cooked Christmas dinner - although I will make the potatoes. I'll pit anyone's roast potatoes against mine - and I will win.'

It sounds like the perfect Christmas, actually - can we come?