



Recovery  
in Mind



# Newsletter

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Dear Students,

I have, personally, a feeling that things have returned to some kind of normality following Covid. But as we all know there are new 'life challenges' for us all regarding cost of living and concerns for people living in other countries in the world. I often think what it must be like to be living with a mental health challenge in countries where opportunities and support for such are lacking or simply don't exist. So, as well as thinking of others and maybe doing something where we can, like offering a welcome to someone who has found themselves living in our community who hadn't planned to be here say a year ago, it seems timely to reflect upon the wonderful sense of community and acceptance that we have developed together here at Recovery in Mind.

Instead of giving gifts in the terms of items bought perhaps we can think of ways we might support others in small and practical ways; like helping a neighbour to put out their rubbish throughout the year when we know they struggle, offer a smile to a stranger, tell someone about Recovery in Mind or other services if you feel they might benefit or give yourself the gift of attending a course or workshop with us at Recovery in Mind.

By doing our best to keep well we are giving a gift to those that love and surround us and perhaps, when the time is right, we can get more involved with helping others and improving our communities and maybe reaching out to others who would appreciate our help and support.

Finally, if someone asked me what I have taken from this 2022 is that you are a resilient and inspiring bunch who never give up and put trust in us to continue to walk alongside you wherever your mental health journey takes you.

Take care, look after yourselves and the entire team here at Recovery in Mind wish you all the best this Christmas and look forward to seeing you again in 2023.

Best wishes,

Angela and all the Recovery in Mind team





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## CHRISTMAS

### A time for:

**C**ompassion, towards ourselves and others;

**H**ope, for better times ahead;

**R**esilience developed during the year - new

**I**nsights discovered along the way.

**S**lowing down to attend to our own real needs,

**T**aking time for ourselves, and for those we love.

**M**indfully living, moment by moment,

**A**ppreciating each positive with gratitude:

**S**tepping forward into the new year ahead.

Cath

# List of tips for looking after your mental health this Christmas

(ideas from the Mental Health Foundation)

## 1. Reframing - How can you be your own best friend this Christmas?

- Turn the volume down on the internal critic.
- Let yourself be the way you feel.
- Have a Christmas that works for you.
- Remember that you are loved. YOU are worth it.
- Give yourself permission to be you.
- Think of it as your rest day.



## 2. Boundaries - What is your agenda this Christmas?

- Have clear boundaries with people - parents / in-laws etc.
- Balance your sense of social obligations against your need for self-care.
- Challenge the assumption that anything 'needs' to happen over Christmas.
- Give yourself permission to say 'no'.
- Think about what your agenda for looking after your wellbeing this Christmas is, and prioritise it.
- Let family and friends know that you will need time out for quiet and calm.



### 3. Actions - What self-care and day to day activities can you keep doing?

- Sit in the garden in a warm coat and get a brief sunny boost when you can.
- Meditate or practise relaxation.
- Find time to yourself - take a long bath, or go on an errand, 5 minutes to yourself can be really helpful.
- If you struggle with sleep, stick as close as possible to your usual routine.
- Keep up with your self-care routine - exercise, sleep, socialise, volunteer, walk outdoors.
- Spend time doing charity or community work or supporting others.
- Ask someone to keep an eye out for you and to check in on how you're doing.
- Create your own experiences and happiness. Be indulgent. Pamper yourself.



### 4. Planning - what do you want to do this Christmas?

- Write down what is really important to you.
- Prioritise and tackle things one at a time.
- Leave space for the unexpected.
- Be mindful of how your routine is about to change.
- Plan ahead and have some nice things booked in that you'd like to do outside of family gatherings.
- If Christmas with your family can be tough then plan something to look forward to with your 'chosen people' (friends, neighbours etc) for afterwards.

**Need support?** If you're in distress this Christmas and want someone to talk to, call Samaritans on 116 123 - their phones are open all day every day over the festive time and they're free.

## Christmas Tree

Star over all

Eye of the night

Stand on my tree

Magical sight

Green under frost

Green under snow

Green under tinsel

Glitter and glow

Appled with baubles

Silver and gold

Spangled with fire

Warm over cold.

Laurence Smith



# A Wellbeing Walk

This is taken from a leaflet about a Wellbeing Walk written by Woking Mind and the RHS (Royal Horticultural Society) It was inspired by the Morikami Garden in Florida.

These activities, to be carried out while on a walk, have been designed to give you an opportunity to consider the possibilities open to you and for happiness.

Become aware of your emotions and senses, paying close attention to your body - from your head to your toes- your posture, any aches and pains, tension or stress. Relax, loosen up and let go.

1. The world around us is in constant motion.

- What movement can you see or hear?
- Is it near you? Fast or slow?
- How are things moving in your life?



2. The outdoors changes day by day, season by season.

- How many different textures can you see or feel?
- What might the next seasonal change be here?
- How have you changed in the past?
- What one thing can you change today?

3. Sometimes it can be hard to see the wood for the trees.

- How do things change when we shift from the details to see the bigger picture?
- Stop, listen and smell your surroundings. Have they changed as you have been walking along the path?
- What possibilities might you create in your life by shifting your point of view?

4. New possibilities exist behind the difficulties we face.

- Observing reflections in some water (it might only be a puddle), how does this transform the landscape around you.
- Do you ever get stuck in the same way of thinking and acting?
- Could looking at something in a new way offer different possibilities?

5. Our lives comprise a series of choices- each a path leading to a new opportunity.

- Take in the colours, textures and shapes around you. What choices did you make to arrive where you are today?
- Who or what can you visualise along the path ahead?
- Are there new paths open to you today that you can choose to take?

Gardens and nature can promote health and wellbeing. They can fascinate us, calm us, and even help us find strength to overcome difficult challenges.

# Make a visual diary of your daily walks

The benefits of getting outside every day are well-known: it helps our physical and mental wellbeing, especially in the winter months.



As we approach the shortest day of the year, finding the energy and motivation to go out for a walk each day can be challenging. It can be all too easy to sit inside and think of lots of reasons not to go out ... too cold, too wet, too cloudy, too dark, too many chores to do.

It's time to be kind to yourself: make each day count.

The idea is to make a daily visual record that represents your own personal winter walks.

Each time that you go out, take a photo (on your phone or camera) or make a mental note of something that you notice or that is of interest to you or that is different. When you are out walking, don't forget to look up and down as well as straight ahead!



When you get home choose one of your photos that inspire you.

Take a piece of paper - any sort will do - and with pencils / pens / paint/ collage or any material that you wish to use or have available, create a picture to represent your photograph.

Before long you will have accumulated a fabulous resource of your own creative memories of your daily walk. You may have a wide and varied selection of images made with all sorts of materials!

How you chose to keep these is up to you. You may put the pages together to form a booklet using string or staples perhaps / put them into a folder / stick them into a scrapbook. You could display them on your wall too!



## A Puppy's Christmas

It's the day before Christmas  
And all through the house  
The puppies are squeaking  
An old rubber mouse.

The wreath which had merrily  
Hung on the door  
Is scattered in pieces  
All over the floor.



The stockings that hung  
In a neat little row  
Now boast a hole in  
Each one of the toes.

The tree was subjected  
To bright-eyed whims,  
And now, although splendid,  
It's missing some limbs.



I catch them and hold them.  
"Be good", I insist.  
They lick me, then run off  
To see what they've missed.

And now as I watch them  
The thought comes to me,  
That their's is the spirit  
That Christmas should be.



Should children and puppies  
Yet show us the way,  
And teach us the joy  
That should come with this day?

Could they bring the message  
That's written above,  
And tell us that, most of all  
Christmas is love.

Author Unknown



# Coping with Christmas

can bring lots of additional stresses such as travelling, eating more food, drinking more alcohol, family arguments, financial pressures and increased household work due to entertaining.

Here are five ways to help you deal with the holiday period:

**1. Avoid unhelpful social comparisons.** Comparing ourselves with other people can have a big effect on how we feel. Sometimes this can be a good thing - motivating us to do better, when we hope we can do as well as those we admire. However, if we don't think we can be as good, it can have a negative impact on our self-esteem. Social media and consumer advertising can make this worse, leading to a treadmill of 'keeping up with the Joneses', especially at Christmas time. Limiting your exposure to social media and television advertising over the Christmas period can help with this, but also realise that you are doing your best and tell yourself that is 'good enough'!

**2. Have realistic expectations about family gatherings.** We tend to put special significance on Christmas as a 'time for family', perhaps because many modern families live far apart? Unfortunately, this expectation can place additional pressure on already strained relationships, particularly amongst people who do not see each other very often and are not used to spending so much time together. Being realistic about what you can expect from this time together will help avoid disappointment and arguments, which might then make it easier to heal family rifts if they arise. Some people are either estranged from their family or have few or no other family members so this can increase their feelings of isolation. In reality, we all need to find some balance in seeing the 'right people for the right amount of time' over the holiday and planning in advance is helpful to achieve this especially with CV19 on the scene.

**3. Participate in your local community.** Christmas can be a time of increased isolation and can be particularly painful for those who have suffered bereavement. However, many organisations offer support at Christmas and finding out in advance what is available in your local area may provide a lifeline. Local libraries, community centres and newspapers are good sources of information. Volunteering can be a good way of reducing loneliness and having a sense of purpose if you would otherwise be spending Christmas alone. I have known individuals who have volunteered to help make lunch in shelters for the homeless who have experienced it as the best Christmas they had ever had. The Samaritans provide free, confidential, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week support on 116 123. They also have local branches in many areas where you can drop in to speak to someone face-to-face. For more information visit: [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org).

**4. Take a break.** Always allow yourself to take 'time out' if you find your stress levels rising. This could be a walk or listening to music - whatever will help you to relax or unwind. Of course, this can be hard to do if you have domestic responsibilities - looking after children or feeling obligated to entertain visitors - so it can help to pre-plan. For example, arrange with your partner to take the kids out for a few hours to give you a break, or manage relatives' expectations by saying that you have planned some 'down time' for everyone to do their own thing and then implementing it. Saying 'no' can be difficult if you feel pressured to join in with family arrangements, however setting limits is important for your own wellbeing. Sometimes having a 'script' can be helpful - recognising the other person's position, but clearly stating your own preference. For example: 'That sounds like a lot of fun, but I'm quite tired/not feeling 100% and would prefer to get an early night.'



**5. Everything in moderation.** It can be tempting to over-indulge at Christmas both due to the availability of food and drink and as a way of covering up difficult feelings. However, there are likely to be negative side-effects from guilt or feeling bloated and unwell, as well as the possibility of alcohol leading to increased emotions, outbursts of frustration or it interferes with your prescribed medication. Avoid overindulgence and do some exercise, outdoors if possible, as evidence suggests that outdoor activity can provide additional benefits to health and wellbeing.

## How to have an achievable 'low impact', DIY, GREEN Christmas

From a GREEN agenda, Covid or no Covid, our world really needs us humans to 'reduce, re-use and re-cycle' more. Maybe this Christmas is the ideal opportunity to do this as many of our usual ways of doing things will be hard to continue under the necessary restrictions? Christmas has become a festival of 'buying things and consumption' for some folk (which is losing sight of the original religious celebration which had prevailed in the UK in the past) and is not at all good for the health of the planet! Not many people think about these issues on an everyday basis, but Christmas celebrations are responsible for a greater part of our carbon footprint than any other time of the year. We humans create so much waste these days!

There are many and varied ways we can adapt our Christmas celebrations to reduce both financial cost but also 'cost to the earth' and here are some of them:



### Making your home feel 'Christmassy' by decorating it:

1. with Christmas decorations you have saved from previous years
2. with locally picked twigs of holly, ivy or yew. (Go on a walk to find them first!) and recycle them in the new year by putting them on your compost heap!
3. Also, use the above with pinecones, string and ribbon to make a wreath for the door or a table decoration (as we did in our RiM Christmas Creativity session last year).
4. by putting up a 'stocking' for each family member (decorate an old, clean! sock each)
5. by making some 'snowflakes' out of white paper folded with snippets cut out of it
6. by displaying your Christmas cards along re-used ribbon or string (it looks nice along the bannisters or a hallway?)
7. by replacing an 'expensive' tree with a branch to put your baubles on (I use a twisted willow branch from the garden, that I keep in the attic each year to hang the lights & fairy on).
8. with your home-made paper chains (I saved last year's wrapping paper for this year's decorations but do save this year's selection and be inventive with it next year!)
9. with 'new decorations' you make this year by recycling, re-using, sticking and sewing. A nice project to make with kids. Angela helped us to make angels the other year out of old-fashioned dolly pegs! Use old cards to make gift-tags. There are loads of other ideas online.

### Making your days feel 'Christmassy' by:

1. using Christmassy scents in burners or candles (or put a few drops of vanilla essence in a little water in a casserole dish in the oven when it's on)
2. lighting a real fire if you have one & keep your orange peel or pinecones to burn on it. (Or try burning sticks of fresh lavender or Rosemary to make everything smell wonderful)
3. preparing 'special' drinks for the occasion - warmed apple juice with a shake of ground cinnamon and a couple of cloves or a 'mulled wine sachet' goes down very well
4. involving your pet in your Christmas celebration in some way....by giving them a red neck bow (saved ribbon from last year?) or special meal etc

5. listening to, playing or singing Christmas music, karaoke (see link) or carols
6. organising readings of Christmas poems, scriptures or prose by finding them before-hand
7. making your own Christmas cards and or wrapping paper (we did simple stars with potato printing on sheets of brown paper one year)
8. home baking - make your own Christmas cake, pudding, yule log, biscuits (see recipe) or mince pies. They'll taste better than the bought variety but can also be cheaper and help you feel more seasonally involved especially if you enlist the help of others to make them!

9. wearing a Christmassy jumper and socks to keep cosy and then you can turn the heating down. (It saves money and reduces your carbon footprint as you are using less fuel).



10. enjoying a lovely Christmas meal but not over-catering and therefore having to throw away uneaten food. Just buy what you need. Over-eating never benefitted anyone.

11. From Boxing Day onwards be creative with any food leftovers that you do have. There are many nutritious and delicious offerings to be made with them (my favourite is 'bubble and squeak' so I cook extra mash deliberately, in order to make it on Boxing day!) Don't throw them out. For instance, left over veg are great tipped into a yummy omelette with grated cheese left from the Xmas cheeseboard.

12. stocking up for your Christmas eating by choosing to buy local & seasonal produce and thereby reducing the 'food miles' your edibles have travelled.

13. staying home & making your best efforts to make it cosy is a win, win situation as you are not wasting the earth's resources in fuel to travel away and are not spending more money on the process either.

14. planning a video call with friends or family who live away so you can keep in touch without having to make a rule breaking and carbon intensive visit. One group I'm a member of has decided we'll each plan a few questions and have a Zoom quiz instead of an Xmas party!

15. playing some Christmas games (see the other article about this for more ideas).



Having a **Good Green Christmas** is very easy really and just takes a little more thought before-hand. Being kind to others AND the earth 'ticks all the boxes' and can leave you with a virtuous feeling which is a long way from Scrooge's 'Bah humbug'! Around this time of year people start to think about setting resolutions for the New year, why not build in some ideas to reduce your carbon footprint in 2023. Low carbon living, just like caring about your mental health, can be a very positive thing for you....and the earth!

Embrace the process and see where it takes you.....

**WISHING YOU ALL A MERRY GREEN CHRISTMAS!**

# Family Christmas Games

Christmas time together with family and friends, however we manage it this year, can be enhanced with time for a little laughter and fun.....

## Santa's Trip



How to play: In this game, players sit in a circle. Each player takes a turn and names objects Santa will take on a trip. The first player starts by naming an object that begins with the letter "A," the second player repeats that object and then adds their own starting with the letter "B" and so on down the alphabet). You can make it more challenging for older kids by picking a sub-category, such as 'things that you wear' or 'objects that can fit into a sleigh.'

## 'Snowball' Race

Materials needed: For this relay race game, you will need some clean potatoes or balls of white yarn and spoons. How to play: Players divide into teams. Each player takes a turn balancing the 'snowball' on a spoon and carrying it from one end of the room to the other. The team that finishes first wins. To make it more difficult put the other hand on your head or use a smaller spoon or larger potato. This could more easily be played outdoors if the weather allows it.

## Christmas Pass the Parcel

Materials needed: Presents wrapped in many layers. (Note: Choose small gift items so that you can use less paper. Preferably use newspapers or re-use old gift wrap).

How to play: Much like musical chairs, this game uses music to signal when players should pass the parcel to the next player. The person who is holding the present when the music stops gets to take one layer of wrapping off the gift. The person who unwraps the last layer gets the present. (The adult who is playing the music should make sure each child has the music stop at his or her turn so that he or she gets to remove at least one layer of gift wrap.)

Variations of the game: For younger children, who may be less patient than older kids, it is a good idea to include small gifts (a sweet?) in each layer of wrapping so that each child gets a gift, and the game goes faster. Older kids might enjoy a forfeit in each layer. (e.g., Sing a carol or do a trick)

## Tree Ornament Guess

A great way to start your Christmas gathering is to have guests guess how many ornaments are on your tree when they walk in. This is an extremely easy game to set up and you can give a small prize to the winner if you would like (perhaps a chocolate off the tree?).



## Christmas Charades

Charades can be great fun and with Christmas charades, you can all foster the holiday spirit. When you produce your Christmas charade list, considering using holiday phrases or titles of Christmas films or songs for them to act out.

## Two Truths and a Lie

Set the theme of "Best Christmas Gift Ever Received" and have each guest produce two that are true and one that is a lie.

Can everyone else spot which ones are real, and which are not?

Do come up with other Christmassy themes....'favourite thing to watch on TV over Xmas' etc

### 'Blind' Christmas Tree Ripping

See how well your guests can rip a Christmas tree shape out of paper without looking. Use a scarf to cover their eyes whilst they 'shape the paper.' Give prizes for the most realistic and creative Christmas trees.

### Merry Christmas Paper Plate Game

The only supplies you'll need for this Christmas game are paper plates and felt pens.

This game involves everyone drawing a Christmas scene on a paper plate, which is then placed on their heads when they have finished it. Points are awarded for the best picture and the quick timing.

### Christmas 20 Questions

Play the game of 20 Questions using Christmas terms that you can make as simple or complex as you want. This is a great game that takes absolutely no supplies or preparation.

### Find It Christmas Scavenger Hunt

Take a photo or provide a clue for any holiday item that you want your guests to find. (e.g., Christmas fairy or jar of mincemeat or Christmas Cracker). Be sure to set the timer so you can find out which team was the fastest.

### Christmas Card Couples

Use old Christmas cards to help your guests find their match. Cut a selection of old cards in half (and you could hide them in another room to make them harder to find for older kids) & get people to find the person with the other half of their card. This can be done several times & the winner is the person who's found the most partners and their cards within a timeframe.

### Christmas musical statues

Play some Christmas music and everyone moves around the room. When the music stops everyone is asked to mime 1 of the following:

- Wrap a gift
- Pretend to be an elf building a toy
- Eat gingerbread
- Ride a reindeer
- Decorate the tree
- Roll out pastry to make mince pies
- Squeeze down the chimney
- Throw a snowball.... etc

After players act out their task, start the music again to resume 'dancing.' Repeat this several times, using new commands each time.

You can even get sillier with the ideas as the game progresses. There is no elimination of players in this game, so that all participants may share in the laughs no matter what their age.



# Festive 'Priceless gifts'

These are some ideas that you or your family could prepare as special gifts that do not cost much financially but can mean a lot to give and receive.

## 1. The Board Game Challenge.

Do you have a board game lover at your house? Write out a card saying you promise to play a game of the recipient's choice with them when they choose (or best of 3!!) and place it in an envelope (& decorate to make it look festive).

## 2. Memorize a Favourite Passage.



This may take some time and some sneakiness. Step one... find out the favourite written passage of your loved one. Is it a scripture? A sonnet? Lyrics from a song? A monologue? Or a paragraph from a beloved book? Got it? Good. Now it's time for step two, which is: memorize it! With memorization complete, all that's left is step three: the delivery. Time and place matters to make it a memorable 'treat'.

## 3. Housekeeping Card.



Does your spouse, roommate, or significant other have a household chore that they just hate to do? Taking out the rubbish? Scrubbing toilets? Sorting laundry? If so, this is a great gift. Give them a card, letter, or note explaining that you will take over that job for them for a certain period.

**WARNING:** Be specific about this gift... If you say you are going to do their chore, then you really need to do it, so let them know exactly what you are going to do and how long you are prepared to do it for. For a day? A week? A month? Let them know what to expect from you and then don't offer more than you can deliver. This will make both you and the recipient of the gift happy campers.

## 4. \_\_\_\_\_ of the Month Club.



What is your speciality? Soup? Bread? Cookies? Casseroles? Whatever it is, you should share it with someone who would appreciate it! A grandparent, an aunt or a friend... Just make them a card with your 'promise' on and you are good to go! Then the recipient of your gift gets something delicious once a month, brought by you. Make someone you love an official member of your salsa (or cake or chicken dish) of the month club! The possibilities here are endless...

## 5. When Skies Are Grey...

Is there someone on your Christmas list this year who is going through a hard time? If so, maybe a "When Skies Are Grey" Kit could help. All you need to include in this kit is a bundle of letters or images that you put together into different envelopes. What kind of letters and images? Well, things to help get them through a rotten day... maybe a funny "remember when" story... or an "I love you because" letter... or a "10 Reasons Why You Are Awesome" note. Other things you can include in the envelopes are quotes or thoughts that help you through tough times as well as some photos of good times together. Put something different in each envelope. Try to gather a small bundle (about 10 envelopes) and then tie them up with a bow. It's surprising how something as simple as an "I'm lucky to have you in my life because..." can help someone through a tough day.

## 6. A Tell-Me Notebook.



This is a great gift for grandparents. All you need is a simple notebook. (Spiral bound notebooks are ideal because you want them to just sit down and write whatever comes into their minds and not worry about handwriting or doing anything fancy in a nice book.) Now of course you don't just give someone an empty notebook... you need to fill the book with questions (About one every three pages so there is plenty of room to write if needed). The questions will vary depending on who you are giving the notebook to. For example: "Tell me about your first house." "Tell me about something you are proud of." "What do you remember most about your mother?" "Tell me about three memorable friends."

Think about what you want to know from the person you are giving the gift to... and then be prepared for some terrific conversations. The last part of this gift is to share with them & listen to their tales they have told.

## 7. Daily Reading Time.

Most kids read every day... but that doesn't mean that we read out loud to them every day. It can be a real treat for even 'big kids' to have a story read to them. The triangles will count as the punches on the card, which makes the card above a 20-punch card. Then you can ask the kids to redeem them when they want you to read one of their chapters out loud to them, or just feel like reading a picture book together. Special time together is priceless!



## 8. 20 Things I Learned By...

Is there someone on your present list who is reaching a milestone? Turning 40? Celebrating 20 years together? Then making them something like this is perfect. For example: when grandparents turn 70, make them a simple book with illustrations or magazine cut outs, sharing the ways they influenced your life and what you've learned from them. These gifts are wonderful for anyone who has helped to shape your life.

## 9. Magic Car Wash.



This gift is good to be given before Christmas... because for this gift you will need to have access to the recipient's vehicle. Take their vehicle, zoom over to the petrol station and give it the once-over, quickly cleaning it inside and out, and then return it to its space before they even know it was gone. Alternatively, you could give the car the once over outside the house, early in the morning whilst your loved one is still snoozing & then take them a cup of tea in bed! Pop a note on the dashboard to tell them about the 'gift'.

## 10. Read This When...



This gift is perfect for people who are away from you. For this gift, you will be writing a number of positive short letters, putting them in separate envelopes and then labelling the envelopes with when they should be read. The topics of the letters you write will depend on the relationship you have with this person, but some ideas for these letters are: Read this when: 'you are worried', or 'you've had a rotten day', or 'you feel homesick', or 'you miss me' etc. Seal each letter and tie the bundle up with a bow.

## 11. A Personalized Playlist.

Think back to school days, when we made those fun mixtapes for each other... you know, on cassettes.... How great would it be to get one of those tapes again? Nowadays we can either burn a CD or download a personalized playlist for that friend, sibling, or special



someone. Maybe a list of songs for a sibling from back in the day, a woman power list for a good friend who needs a pick-me-up -- or make a running playlist of music that they love. Be creative!

## 12. Park Tour Permit.



Find five local parks and tour each one. (Not all in the same day!) If you're with the children, get them to compare slides, big toys, open space, etc., and decide which park is the best.

## 13. Netflix Night in with snacks.

Not sure an explanation is needed here... you provide the snacks & drinks & they get to choose what you watch. Another variation of this would be to get a take-away of their choice but that's more expensive!

## 14. A month or week of meals.



A  
Month  
of  
Meals

This gift takes a little bit of prior planning, but it is worth it, and is a great gift to parents and in-laws for Christmas.

To make a month's (or a weeks') worth of meals, choose meals that freeze well and then for the next few weeks that is what you make your family for dinner.

As you prepare these dinners, just make extra... so long as you're already cooking... and when the meal is finished, freeze the extra portions. Before you know it, you'll have quite a collection of meals that you can take over as your present.

## 15. Favourite Recipes Pack.



Put together a collection of recipes you grew up eating or which are your favourites or even dishes/items you think the recipient would like. Everything from your grandma's cookies, to uncle's BBQ sauce or a special recipe you found online. Give them the space to add some of their own recipes too.

## 16. A Personalized Screen Saver.



Make personalized screen savers and sneak them onto the recipient's computer. Then every time it pops up on their computer, they are reminded of you.

## 17. 'Remember This' Book.

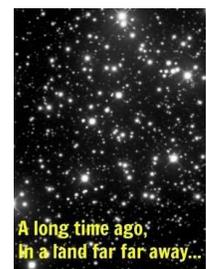


Take a blank notebook and fill it with short written memories of things you have done with the recipient. Nothing fancy. It can be a scrapbook, but you don't have to provide pictures if you don't want to. Just short stories, insider jokes, and song lyrics etc. Memories of times you have shared together & that are meaningful to you.

## 18. Time Capsule Kit.

This is a good thing to do with the children. What they will get is an empty box (it sounds like a practical joke...) with a sheet explaining what a time capsule is and what you want them to do.

Then, on New Year's Day, fill the box together, with things like predictions, favourite sweet wrappers, newspaper clippings, photos, notes, and whatever else the kids want to include to typify their current life. When it is filled, wrap it up securely and write on the outside the date it can be opened again. Put this away in a memorable 'safe place' until then.



## External Links

<https://www.whychristmas.com> For all things Christmassy.....

<https://www.tistheseason.to.be/> Christmas Karaoke songs

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/christmas> lots of ideas on how to cope over Christmas

<https://www.headstogether.org.uk/tips-on-looking-after-your-mental-health-this-christmas/>

<https://www.mhm.org.uk/blog/christmas-wellbeing-tips>

<https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/sites/default/files/Thriving%20at%20Christmas.pdf>



## Further Help and Support

If you are struggling with your mental health and feel that you need further help & support here are some contact numbers for you:

**West Berkshire Community Mental Health Team**- 01635 292020

**CRHTT (Crisis Response and Home Treatment Team)**- 0300 365 9999

**Samaritans** - 116 123

**NHS** - 111 (number to call should you feel you are physically unwell with Coronavirus or indeed any other physical health condition which is deteriorating.

**West Berkshire Community Hub** is where you can find out information and support locally for a variety of matters relating to Coronavirus - look at their website (cut and paste this into your internet browser) <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/coronavirus-communityhub>

**The Age UK Berkshire Befriending and Buddying scheme** is now open for referrals. Enquiries should be made directly to Age UK Berkshire by emailing [info@ageukberkshire.org.uk](mailto:info@ageukberkshire.org.uk) or calling 0118 959 4242

999 is for **EMERGENCY** calls only.