



Recovery
in Mind



Newsletter

No 17

03/12/2020

Dear Students,

It goes without saying that this year has been a very difficult and challenging one. We have all been affected in so many ways by the pandemic. No-one has got away with sailing through 2020 without changes to their personal freedoms, home life, ability to see those we love and care for and about, and maybe work or volunteering. It has played havoc with our mental health, and for the first time many people throughout the world have experienced what it's like to have such difficulties. I'm hoping that this will add to the increasing empathy, understanding and compassion that has developed as a result of the pandemic. Although it has been tough, we have heard from some of you that there have been positives. Some of you have been able to spend more time discovering your creativity; feel less pressured to be constantly 'doing;' develop skills to 'connect' in new ways; and have used the resources available to you to continue your recovery.

It has been 'stop and start' with our courses this year, but we know that our weekly newsletter was appreciated by many of you. We end this term with our Festive Walk (& mince pies) that is planned for Wed 16th December at Thatcham Nature Discovery Centre, and there is still time to book on to join us for some socially distanced walk and chat. We hope to see many of you there - whatever the weather!

It's also great to be able to share with you all that Recovery in Mind has been chosen as one of the recipients of Greenham Trust 'Doubled Funding Day' coming up on Friday 11th December. They will give Recovery in Mind £2 for every £1 we can fundraise or get donated. We've been busy with various fundraising and awareness-raising events. If you know of anyone who might like to donate (it must be done on the day of 11th December) then just copy & paste the link below and press 'donate'. Do also get in touch if you have any last-minute fundraising ideas. We missed out on lots of fundraising opportunities this year and I'm completely committed to our courses remaining free to anyone who needs our help and support, so this is an important way for us to gather some financial support through this event.

Cut & paste this link to get to the donation page if you are interested:

<https://app.thegoodexchange.com/project?advanced&status=0&pageNumber=1&pageSize=6&Reference=17897>

We are also pleased to announce that we are starting our first 'Online Welcome to Recovery' courses in January. If you know of anyone who you think might be interested in attending one of these please invite them to request the Bitesize course from the website asap and having watched that, they can book a place as a new student on 1 of our online courses. We have made the timing of the Wednesday course over the lunchtime period in the hope that it might fit in well with the 'working day' for some people, and the Tuesday course is from 10am.

Finally, the Recovery in Mind team would like to share our 'gift' to you this Christmas. It would be a box full of HOPE for 2021, wrapped up with our most sincere and warmest best wishes, tied up with a bow of optimism, and the card attached says, 'You got through 2020 and we will be here for you again in 2021, offering our courses and support to help you to continue to move forward with your recovery, whatever is ahead'.

Wishing you all a peaceful Christmas and a positive 2021.
Angela and the Recovery in Mind Team



In This Week's Issue

- The Bee Carol
- How to have an achievable 'low impact', DIY, Green Christmas
- Family Christmas Games
- Festive 'Priceless' gifts
- How the Grinch stole Christmas by Dr Seuss
- Festive Season Celebrations
- Coping with Christmas
- Loneliness
- A Victorian Christmas
- Advent - A time for reflection?
- Be Kind to yourself at Christmas
- Mary Berry Stained Glass Window Biscuits
- 'Festive Season' wordsearch by Fiona
- External links and further help and support

The Bee Carol

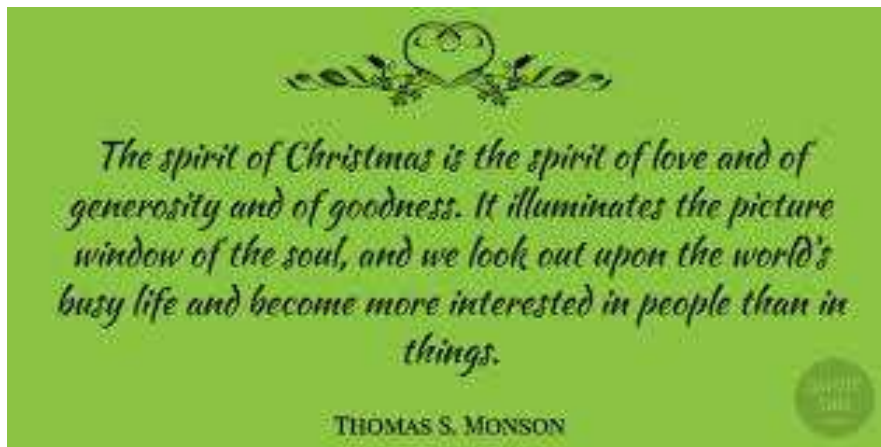
Silently on Christmas Eve,
the turn of midnight's key;
all the garden locked in ice -
a silver frieze -
except the winter cluster of the bees.

Flightless now and shivering,
around their Queen they cling;
every bee a gift of heat;
she will not freeze
within the winter cluster of the bees.

Bring me for my Christmas gift
a single golden jar;
let me taste the sweetness there,
but honey leave
to feed the winter cluster of the bees.

Come with me on Christmas Eve
to see the silent hive -
trembling stars cloistered above -
and then believe,
bless the winter cluster of the bees.

Carol Ann Duffy



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 2021. 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.

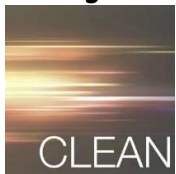
Most kids read every day... but that doesn't mean that we read out loud to them every day. It can be a real treat for even 'big kids' to have a story read to them. The triangles will count as the punches on the card, which makes the card above a 20-punch card. Then you can ask the kids to redeem them 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.

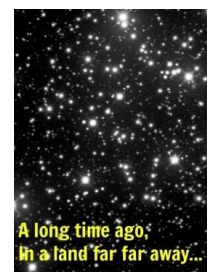


Take a blank notebook and fill it with short written memories of things you have done with the recipient. Nothing fancy. It can be a scrapbook, but you don't have to provide pictures if you don't want to. Just short stories, insider jokes, and song lyrics etc. Memories of times you have shared together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



"How the Grinch Stole Christmas"

by Dr. Suess

*...So he paused. And the Grinch put his hand to his ear.
And he did hear a sound rising over the snow.
It started in low. Then it started to grow.
But the sound wasn't sad! Why, this sound sounded merry!
It couldn't be so! But it WAS merry! VERY!
He stared down at Whoville! The Grinch popped his eyes!
Then he shook! What he saw was a shocking surprise!
Every Who down in Whoville, the tall and the small,
Was singing! Without any presents at all!
He HADN'T stopped Christmas from coming! IT CAME!
Somehow or other, it came just the same!
And the Grinch, with his grinch-feet ice-cold in the snow,
Stood puzzling and puzzling: "How could it be so?"
"It came with out ribbons! It came without tags!"
"It came without packages, boxes or bags!"
And he puzzled three hours, till his puzzler was sore.
Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before!
"Maybe Christmas," he thought, "doesn't come from a store."
"Maybe Christmas...perhaps...means a little bit more!"...*



Letter writing

Dear Reader,

I hope this finds you well. Do you like receiving letters? Most people do, as long as they are not bills! Try this activity. Write a letter to a friend or relative praising them for an achievement and encouraging them in further activities. Now write yourself a letter of praise for an achievement and encouragement in further activities. Put the letter in a safe place and read when you are feeling in need of a boost.

How did it feel writing the letter to a friend? Now compare that with how it felt writing to yourself. My guess is you found the first one easier. The essence of this activity is to treat yourself as you would a friend.

Best wishes,

Gillian



Festive season celebrations

commemorate a religious or national holiday, traditions, signify the end of a season and allow people to take a break from ordinary day to day activities. They are often characterized by colourful decorations, the sharing of special meals together, time off work and, in some cases, display of symbols of unity. These festive celebrations have existed since the dawn of time and can be found in all cultures across the globe allowing people to celebrate their 'belonging' and adherence to a particular value system. Here are some examples:

1. **Christmas** is one of the most popular festivals worldwide, celebrated by millions of people



around the globe. The Christmas holiday takes place from the 24th of December and lasts well into the New Year. Commemorating the birth of Jesus, Christmas Day is on 25th December and involves families coming together to attend Church services, special meals and gifts. It is also characterized by customs such as putting up a Christmas tree, sending cards, singing Christmas carols and receiving gifts from Santa Claus. Due to the amount of shopping for food and gifts that takes place around this time, it is also a period of heightened economic activity in many countries around the world - even during the times of CV19.

2. **Diwali**, or the Festival of Lights, is a five-day Hindu Festival celebrating the triumph of light over darkness, hope over despair and generally the victory of good over evil. It is the most popular and biggest holiday in India as well as in some Far East countries such as the Philippines, Myanmar, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Caribbean countries like Guyana and Trinidad & Tobago. Celebrated between October and November, it is celebrated by lighting up the house with diyas (lights and candles), wearing new clothes, praying to the goddess Lakshmi and pulling crackers! People also exchange sweets and gifts to share their happiness and joy with everyone.



3. **Eid Al Fitr** is a religious holiday celebrated by Muslims around the world and it signifies the end of the 29-30-day sunrise to sunset period of fasting during the holy month of Ramadan. Eid Al Fitr was first celebrated by the prophet Mohammed after a battle victory in 624 C.E. It begins at the sighting of the new moon during the month of 'Shawwal' and is celebrated on different days by Muslims as the moon may be sighted on different days around the world. During Eid, special religious services and prayers (*Salat*) are held and people celebrate by buying and wearing new clothes, exchanging gifts with loved ones and partaking in acts of charity and sharing meals.



4. **Chanukah** is also known as the Festival of Lights and Feast of Dedication and it is an eight-day Jewish holiday commemorating the re-dedication of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem at the time of the Maccabean Revolt against the Seleucid Empire of the 2nd century BC. Each night throughout the holiday, a candle or oil-based light called a menorah is lit and blessings and songs are used to remember events of the past with people enjoying the special foods and activities of the festival.



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.

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.

Loneliness

Being alone is not the same as being lonely. Being alone is a state of being by oneself without others around. It can be a healthy phenomenon, as everyone needs a little time away from others to plan, to think, and to rest.

However, being lonely is a different matter entirely. When people are alone, they don't always feel lonely. While many people can still feel lonely even if they are surrounded by people. To put it simply, loneliness can be viewed as a signal indicating that some important social connections are at risk or even absent.

Christmas is a time when individuals who do not have many social contacts are more likely to feel lonely as the general societal perspective is that this is a time of year for people to be sociable & spend time with family. Of course, for some people this is not possible for many and varied reasons, but it may help to understand this phenomenon in more depth.

Loneliness is both genetic and environmental. Why do we feel lonely? Perhaps it's people's nature. Researchers find that loneliness can be passed down from parent to child. The genetic data collected from twins, relatives, and adopted children proves this trait is a part of their genetic makeup. Loneliness is not only natural, sometimes people feel lonely because they're affected by others. Loneliness can be contagious. People who are not lonely tend to become lonelier if they are around lonely people, according to research.

Loneliness is closely linked to health problems. While it's normal to feel lonely or isolated from time to time, too much loneliness can be unhealthy. Numerous studies have linked excessive ongoing feelings of loneliness to the following health issues:

- Breathing difficulties
- Feeling of isolation
- Brain fog
- Stress
- Obsessive behaviours

However, as a matter of fact, loneliness is a condition that can be fought against and overcome. Here are some ideas to help you to cope with loneliness more easily.

1. Take a walk to refresh your mind and body. Walking has been proven to offer many great health benefits for the body and the mind. Yes, any form of exercise would do as well, but walking is great as it allows you to explore your locality. When you decide to walk, even when you are traveling to your usual destination, try to take a different route as it is going to make you feel involved in your own town or village. At the end, you may discover something new you hadn't known before! Remember also to take some deep breaths of fresh air and remain mindful.



2. Join a club and meet people who share your passion too. Everyone has some passion. Sometimes, sharing your passion with others does not only open you up to more friendship; it may enhance your talents in surprising ways! Even the smallest town has some clubs. If you are interested in public service, why don't you try volunteering or the Rotary Club, or the Lions Club? If you like playing chess, join a chess club; playing with others will sharpen your logic skills. Or you can even explore things which are new to you. Pottery, writing, wine tasting, dancing. These are only a few examples of many. Online support groups foster connectedness with others which is helpful too. If there're no nearby clubs that interest you, start one of your own. The odds are good that if you have an interest, someone else in the area is likely to share it. Some RiM students in the past have started

their own local support groups for example "Mental Health Mates" and indeed Angela is an inspiration to us all with this!

3. Heat up a "real" conversation to invite deep friendship. We are especially prone to loneliness in the modern society. Social media like Facebook or WhatsApp may allow more convenient communication especially in these complicated CV19 days, but all these ways of communication neglect the importance of face-to-face socialization. Sometimes we prefer online communication to face-to-face conversation because online communication is less committed, if you don't respond instantly, it's okay. But face-to-face conversation doesn't really need to be stressful. When you're with someone who you can be comfortable with, silence is precious too. Try to reconnect with your old friends, have a coffee with them at 2m distance and have a chat. You can even talk about the things you did together in the past and understand how you are progressing, re-building your relationship in the here-and-now. Maybe there was somebody you met in a RiM session some time ago & you swapped contact details but never followed this up. Maybe now is the time to change that, make contact & set yourself the goal of 'connecting' in some way that's appropriate to you both.

4. Adopt a pet and enjoy their company. Having a pet can heal pain or anxiety arising from loneliness. It does so, as it colours your leisure time. Pets are always there willing to spend time with you and showing 'unconditional positive regard'. Think of all the walking or playing and fun times you can have. As the creator of the comic Peanuts, Charles Schulz said, "happiness is a warm puppy". If you hope to combat loneliness and embrace happiness, (and have the finances!) you may consider getting yourself a pet! Many RiM students have reported feeling more connected having got themselves a pet. It can be surprising how going for a dog walk can result in casual, friendly conversation too!



5. Offer others a helping hand to realize your own value. Very often, the root of loneliness is that we don't feel valued by others. But in fact, self-value is earned. Audrey Hepburn once said: "As you grow older, you will discover that you have two hands, one for helping yourself, the other for helping others".

This quote highlights the importance of helping others, and the fact that most of the time we are ourselves the key to many problems we are facing; in other words, you can help cure your own loneliness. Giving others a hand will help you realize your value, as you discover you can do so. And helping others also opens opportunities of deep friendships, as very often, a deep relationship is forged in adversity. Write your colleague/friend a card if he or she is struggling. Read out loud for an elderly person you know or help a child to read. Volunteering can be helpful to both you and the person you are volunteering with, as many of our RiM students find when they move on to volunteering in community settings.

6. Positively Talk to yourself to build a better self-relationship. When you feel lonely and think you have got no friends to talk to, you yourself is the best person to talk to. It may sound weird, but it works. You can simply talk to yourself in your mind or pick up a pen and write yourself a letter (journaling). Treat yourself as a friend of yours. Tell about your day and talk about your feelings. You can share 'different' ideas with yourself without worrying what others think. This serves as an opportunity to build a better relationship with yourself. In life, there are many people around you. They come and go. Only a very few of them stay around always. So, the



most important relationship in life is the relationship you have with yourself. You will be clearer of how you feel and what you think after a genuine conversation with you!

7. Do something random to experience new excitement. Loneliness is sometimes accompanied by boredom. Some spontaneous randomness could drive away these feelings. It can be small things like taking a different route to work, walking to the other side town where you have never been, or trying a random recipe for a supper dish you've never eaten before. Such randomness brings you the excitement of discovering something new. When you take a different route to your destination, you barely know what you will see and who you will see at the next street corner. Every minute is new to you. It's like an adventure and takes you 'out of yourself'.

8. Strike up conversation with strangers to feel connected. What is the best thing about strangers? They don't know you and they don't judge you. Even if they judge you, you needn't feel bad as you won't see them ever again! Strangers are everywhere. There are also many ways for you to meet people online through apps and websites. Talking to someone makes you feel connected, even if the connection only lasts for a while. But when the connection is lost, you won't feel that bad because from the very beginning you have known that this won't last long.



9. Stay away from people who are not sympathetic. It may sound counter-intuitive, but somehow staying in the company of toxic people who don't show sympathy for others may make you even lonelier. A fruitful relationship is supposed to make you feel contented. However, being with someone who is unable to understand you, it is hard to feel happy. You may even feel lonelier if that person is so self-interested that they constantly undermine your self-respect. Consider walking away from anyone who doesn't make you feel happy, or makes you feel even lonelier. What nourishes our lives are meaningful relationships, not destructive ones. If you find someone who is deepening your loneliness, it might be beneficial to let them go.

10. Develop a sense of connectedness within literature and the media. Many people feel more connected and less lonely by 'investing' in characters in books or films and soap operas. I once had a house-mate who on moving to a new area became 'best friends' with 'Brookside' soap opera characters as it reminded her of her home and friends she'd left in Liverpool. Watching this show every time it was on, made her feel less lonely in the new town. Personal engagement in the lives of book characters has eternally been a good source of connectedness for those challenged in this area of life. Maya Angelou for example, spent many years of her young life unable to speak & she cut off from others. During this time, she read story books constantly and I imagine she was able to feel connected to characters 'on her own terms' at a very hard time of her life. She later wrote many books herself which was a continuation of this process. Stephen Fry is another person who has openly discussed his love of literature for escaping loneliness.

11. If your loneliness is continuously stressing you, seek professional medical help. Persistent loneliness can be part of depression in which case medication is sometimes necessary. Counselling can also be helpful. Sessions with a Psychologist might help you pinpoint what triggers your loneliness or 'Talking Therapies' can help you with professional strategies. Please remember seeking help is not a weakness; quite the contrary, seeking help takes a lot more strength than pretending everything is fine.

A Victorian Christmas

The Victorian period of history has probably shaped more of how we now celebrate Christmas than any other. It was at this time that many of the foods and decorations that we now commonly associate with Christmas became popular.

Books such as 'A Christmas Carol' by Charles Dickens, published in 1843, put together new feelings about Christmas and helped to shape the Christmas traditions and celebrations we still have today.



Christmas cards were also invented in 1843 and Christmas crackers a few years later. The Christmas tree really became popular in the UK when a drawing of the British Royal family with a tree (above) was published in 1848. Also, during the Victorian period there was a renaissance of singing carols with people collecting old folk tunes and adding new words to them. Popular magazines published the music and words for carols and Christmas songs, so people could make their own entertainment at home on the piano. Many new carols were also written at this time including Silent Night (written in 1816 but it was translated into English in 1863), Good King Wenceslas and In the Bleak Midwinter (written in 1872 and became a carol in 1906).

Magazines and books also published new 'parlour games' which became popular ways of having entertainment after Christmas dinner.

'Traditional' cakes and puddings only really became what we now think of them during the Victorian period, with more cookbooks being published and dried fruits and spices, although still being expensive, were becoming available to many more people.

Christmas also became much more 'commercial' with there being presents you could buy for the occasion and a much wider range of food available. Traditionally, any presents had been made by hand, like sewn articles and wooden toys. There was no electric lighting, with only oil or gas lamps and certainly no central heating. So, it was dark and cold, not easy to make things- but people did amazing craft works even in those conditions!



With trains expanding throughout the UK at the time, travel became easier; so, foods such as roast turkey became more popular (and one also appeared in 'A Christmas Carol'!). They could be transported from farms in the countryside to the towns for sale much more quickly. Having a roast goose was still very popular. Many people belonged to 'goose clubs' where you put some money away each week and in December, you'd have enough to buy a goose (the plot of the Sherlock Holmes story 'The Blue Carbuncle' is about a jewel being hidden in a goose from a goose club).

Whether you had a goose or turkey, it was normally spit roasted over a fire or on a mechanical spit called a 'bottle jack & hasner' which was a wind-up vertical spit with a metal surround (to reflect the heat all around the bird) which was placed in front of an open fire/range. Sometimes bakers would also let people cook their birds in the large baker's oven.

It was also during the later Victorian period that the 12 Days of Christmas became less important. Many more people now lived in cities and large towns and had to work over the Christmas period. As a result, the Twelfth Night parties and Twelfth Night Cake became Christmas parties and Christmas Cake.

We at 'Recovery in Mind' wonder what 'traditions' that we may adhere to in today's world will be passed down to the generations of the future?

Maybe you are making new traditions for your family to follow...let us know what they are!

Adapted from whychristmas.com

CHRISTMAS

A time for:

Compassion, towards ourselves and others;

Hope, for better times ahead;

Resilience developed during the year - new

Insights discovered along the way.

Slowing down to attend to our own real needs,

Taking time for ourselves, and for those we love.

Mindfully living, moment by moment,

Appreciating each positive with gratitude:

Stepping forward into the new year ahead.

Cath

Advent - A Time for Reflection?

We have now entered the season of Advent, which in the traditional Christian calendar is a 40-day period in which people used the four Sundays and weeks before Christmas to prepare for the coming birth of Jesus. Advent (which means 'coming' in Latin) started this year on 29th November and ends on 24th December. Many of us buy Advent candles or calendars to count down to Christmas, which usually start on 1st December. We might enjoy chocolate inside our calendars (I know I do!!) Fun fact: the first chocolate Advent calendar was made in 1958, and in the UK, Cadbury's made their first chocolate version in 1971, although chocolate calendars only really became popular in the 1980's.



However we may be feeling about the run-up to the festive season - whether it's something we want to celebrate or forget about - I wonder whether this is an appropriate time to pause and reflect on the past year, and prepare for the year ahead? We can often get so caught up in the practical (often stressful) preparations that we can forget to give ourselves the time and space we need. And, of course, this year we have the added complication of trying to work out the best ways of connecting with loved ones within the restrictions.

The month of January is named after the Roman god, Janus, who was the god of beginnings, and this month is the doorway into the new year. Janus is depicted with two faces, because he looks to both the future and the past. I wonder whether, as 2020 draws to a close, now is a good time to reflect on the challenges we've each overcome this year; the resilience we've developed; and to consider the goals we might like to set for ourselves to enable us to move forward positively into 2021. Cath

"Be kind to yourself at Christmas."

An excerpt from the Mind website written by one of their bloggers

"I used to think that **Be kind to yourself at Christmas** meant practical things. That's part of it, but kindness is also about what you say to yourself. What would I say to a friend who was struggling with depression at Christmas? Who was putting on a brave face, pulling crackers and going through the motions when they wanted to curl up and cry? I wouldn't tell them they had failed by being unhappy. I wouldn't tell them off because they were "supposed" to enjoy themselves. I'd say: "I'm sorry you're struggling right now. Christmas can be such a hard time when you're depressed."

So why wasn't I saying that to myself? That was the most important Christmas present I could give myself: kindness. Kindness and permission to need help. It was still hard getting through Christmas, but being kind and gentle with myself? That made a big difference. Letting myself be sad. Letting myself need support, which I got from the Samaritans who replied to my emails all through the Christmas period. This year I'm planning ahead instead of abandoning myself at Christmas. I've been working out what my triggers are and thinking of ways around them. For example, I'm upset by shop assistants asking friendly questions about Christmas, so I'll wear headphones when I go shopping.

"**I'm trying to be kind to myself, too, like making myself a self-care stocking with things that will help.**" When I was in denial about finding the festive period a struggle, I didn't really think about things I could buy for self-care. And when Christmas Day came around it was too late to get them, so I ended up feeling worse.

It could be something as simple as some nice bubble bath - much better to buy it ahead of time than feel miserable without it. Especially if it's nicely wrapped up like a present from me to me. I might even write myself a card to go with it.

You can't choose when Christmas comes or how you feel about it, but you can choose to help yourself get through it."

Why not think about your own potential needs in advance and make sure you do everything in your power to meet your own needs over the holiday period. Perhaps write yourself a 'to do' list outlining the things you should remember in order to look after yourself. Funnily, the more you take care of you, the more you can take care of others. As people do when they own a car, they need to keep its fuel tank filled so that when they must make a journey, it is ready. Keeping your own 'metaphorical fuel tank filled' will mean you have enough personal resources to give some out to others, if necessary.



Using your mobile phone as a Wellness Toolkit

Having been part of the recent Welcome to Recovery Course and listened to Toria's brilliant session on the Wellness Tool Kit I have been thinking about the concept. Around the same time, I had a conversation about looking at photos on my mobile phone. It occurred to me that photos on a phone could be another form of Wellness Tool kit. Take photos of people, places and things that calm you, soothe you, excite you, inspire you and make you happy. Then, when the need arises quickly (or slowly) look at the photos. Gillian



Relaxation

Anxiety is a normal healthy reaction which happens to everyone at times of danger or in worrying situations and will then often improve your performance enabling you to react faster.



Sadly, anxiety can become a problem when it interferes with your performance or everyday life. This is when it is necessary to learn how to control or manage it. You are invited to listen to our sound recording of a 'Progressive Muscular Relaxation' session which is about 14 minutes in length. It is available on our website in the 'Resources'

dropdown list. It explains the importance of relaxation and takes you through a short relaxation session. With regular practice one can learn to calm oneself down and take back control.

This might be a useful 'tool' for inclusion in your 'Christmas survival toolbox' or just part of allowing yourself some 'me time' over the festive period.

I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.

You may not control all the events that happen to you, but you can decide not to be reduced by them. We delight in the beauty of the butterfly, but rarely admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty.

I've learned that whenever I decide something with an open heart, I usually make the right decision. You can only become truly accomplished at something you love.

If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude. Maya Angelou



Mary Berry's stained-glass window biscuits

These look so pretty and are great as gifts or to hang on the Christmas tree. Make holes with a cocktail skewer before baking if you want to thread ribbon or string and hang them.

MAKES 20

175g butter, softened

100g caster sugar

225g plain flour

about 20 boiled sweets (different colours)

Step 1 Preheat the oven to 160C/fan 140C/gas 3. Line two baking sheets with non-stick paper. You will need a large star or other Christmas shaped cutters.

Step 2 Measure the butter and sugar into a bowl and, using a wooden spoon or spatula, beat until smooth. Add the flour and bring the dough together using your hands.

Step 3 Roll out on a lightly floured work surface using a rolling pin until the dough is about 5mm thick. Use your large cutter to cut out the shapes. If you have a small version of your chosen cutter use this, otherwise cut the middle out of each shape by hand, leaving about 1cm of biscuit around the edge. Arrange on the baking sheets.

Step 4 Separate the sweets into their colours and put them in plastic bags (one colour in each bag). Crush using a rolling pin until fine grains and then sprinkle these grains in the middle of each biscuit.

Step 5 Bake for 12-15 minutes or until pale golden and the sweets have melted. Leave to stand on the trays for about 5 minutes. Transfer to a cooling rack and leave to cool and firm up.

TIP You can stick to one colour per biscuit or create a rainbow effect by mixing the colours.

PREPARE AHEAD Can be made up to 2 days in advance and kept in a sealed box. The biscuits freeze well.



'Festive Season' Wordsearch



| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S | M | L | I | F | S | A | M | T | S | I | R | H | C | F | V | S |
| R | O | A | S | T | T | U | R | K | E | Y | E | E | A | E | X | T |
| O | J | N | A | T | I | V | I | T | Y | A | N | V | R | S | A | N |
| O | C | O | M | S | T | A | R | R | A | D | I | E | O | T | D | E |
| D | E | I | T | E | S | C | E | A | N | I | W | S | L | I | V | S |
| N | L | T | S | I | E | R | E | D | A | L | D | R | S | V | E | E |
| O | E | A | I | P | L | A | D | I | M | O | E | A | I | E | N | R |
| S | B | R | R | E | B | C | N | T | G | H | L | E | N | J | T | P |
| H | R | O | H | C | U | K | I | I | O | F | L | Y | G | U | C | M |
| T | A | C | C | N | A | E | E | O | H | L | U | W | I | M | A | I |
| A | T | E | T | I | B | R | R | N | I | E | M | E | N | P | L | S |
| E | I | D | X | M | A | S | P | U | D | D | I | N | G | E | E | T |
| R | O | H | C | E | E | P | S | S | N | E | E | U | Q | R | N | L |
| W | N | A | B | I | R | T | H | O | F | J | E | S | U | S | D | E |
| S | S | R | E | H | T | O | O | T | G | N | I | V | I | G | A | T |
| A | T | N | A | S | E | R | I | F | G | N | I | R | A | O | R | O |
| W | O | N | S | E | E | R | T | N | E | M | E | T | I | C | X | E |

Giving to others
 Celebrations
 Roast turkey
 New Years' Eve
 Wreaths on doors
 Roaring fires
 Carol singing
 Holiday
 Christmas
 Nativity
 Crackers
 Baubles
 Tradition
 Elf
 Mistletoe
 Trees

Birth of Jesus
 Mulled wine
 Christmas films
 Queen's speech
 Advent calendar
 Decoration
 Festive jumpers
 Xmas pudding
 Mince pies
 Hogmanay
 Reindeer
 Star
 Santa
 Excitement
 Presents
 Snow



External Links

<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/coping-loneliness-during-coronavirus-outbreak/>

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

<https://www.tistheseasonsto.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 or calling 0118 959 4242

999 is for **EMERGENCY** calls only.