



# Newsletter

No 37

30/11/2023

Dear Students,

The festive season is full of requirements to 'be prepared and plan ahead'. Obviously, this can apply to present giving & wrapping, food shopping, card sending or whatever other chores that may be on your list. However, making time to prepare ourselves in other ways isn't something most of us prioritise or even put 'on the list'. Whether it's that you are busy in the run up to Christmas or have lots booked in for the few days over Christmas period, we need to recognise that taking time to look after ourselves is essential. Also, we all want to enjoy any opportunities, so this might be avoiding those things that can be detrimental to our mental health and wellbeing: drinking too much, sleeping too little, overspending, or simply trying to please everyone else. This doesn't make us 'not much fun', boring or selfish - quite the opposite. If we take the time to care for ourselves, then everyone we come into contact with gets a 'better' version of us. We can then feel positive, energised and optimistic.

Taking time to think about whether we have over committed to too much or how we might cope with difficult situations can also be helpful. Taking some time out, a few early nights and time for some gentle exercise and rest is essential. I like to think of the Festive Season in terms of the Christian Christmas but also a chance to have a rest mid-winter.

With all of this in mind, we hope that sending our Festive Newsletter out a little earlier this year might help you to 'put yourself first and foremost' on your list when preparing for Christmas this year. We hope you enjoy this edition, grab a cuppa, sit down for an hour and consider how you fit best into the month ahead.



Finally, all the team at Recovery in Mind wish you a restful time whatever you may be doing, and we look forward to seeing you again in 2024.

Best wishes, Angela and all the Recovery in Mind team

**COME & JOIN THE TEAM AT THE STUDENT FESTIVE FUN SOCIAL ON  
WEDNESDAY 13<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 10-11:30am AT BROADWAY HOUSE -  
BOOK VIA THE WEBSITE** (for students who have completed the Welcome to Recovery course)

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## Images of Grasmere - Winter

The birch tree woods  
Are hung with thousand diamond drops  
Of melted hoar-frost, every tiny knot  
In the bare twigs, each little budding-place  
Cased with its several bead; what myriads there  
Upon one tree, while all the distant grove  
That rises to the summit of the steep  
Is like a mountain built of silver light.  
William Wordsworth



We would like to invite you all to join us for our **Winter Festival** on **Monday 26th February 2024** from 10am-3pm at Stockcross Village Hall. We have a couple of wonderful creative people coming to lead two workshops that we will all get to experience during the day. We will also provide lunch, refreshments and the opportunity to spend a day together with the Recovery in Mind 'tribe'.

Creativity, fun and laughter - what could be more perfect for a mid-winter Monday in February (oh, and it's been kindly funded by Pangbourne Rotary Club so it's free for any students - past or present - to attend).

Please book your place via the website.

# "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.



artwork by Laura Jane Illustration, @laurajaneillustrations

[Laura Jane Illustrations](https://www.laurajaneillustrations.com)



**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.



# December Kindness 2023



## ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

## Happier · Kinder · Together



MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
<p>4 Support a charity, cause or campaign you really care about</p>	<p>5 Give a gift to someone who is homeless or feeling lonely</p>	<p>6 Leave a positive message for someone else to find</p>	<p>7 Give kind comments to as many people as possible today</p>	<p>1 Spread kindness and share the December calendar with others</p>	<p>2 Contact someone you can't be with to see how they are</p>	<p>3 Offer to help someone who is facing difficulties at the moment</p>
<p>11 Buy an extra item and donate it to a local food bank</p>	<p>12 Be generous. Feed someone with food, love or kindness today</p>	<p>13 See how many different people you can smile at today</p>	<p>14 Share a happy memory or inspiring thought with a loved one</p>	<p>8 Do something helpful for a friend or family member</p>	<p>9 Notice when you're hard on yourself or others and be kind instead</p>	<p>10 Listen wholeheartedly to others without judging them</p>
<p>18 Ask for help and let someone else discover the joy of giving</p>	<p>19 Contact someone who may be alone or feeling isolated</p>	<p>20 Help others by giving away something that you don't need</p>	<p>21 Appreciate kindness and thank people who do things for you</p>	<p>15 Say hello to your neighbour and brighten up their day</p>	<p>16 Look for something positive to say to everyone you speak to</p>	<p>17 Give thanks. List the kind things others have done for you</p>
<p>25 Treat everyone with kindness today, including yourself!</p>	<p>26 Get outside. Pick up litter or do something kind for nature</p>	<p>27 Call a relative who is far away to say hello and have a chat</p>	<p>28 Be kind to the planet. Eat less meat and use less energy</p>	<p>22 Congratulate someone for an achievement that may go unnoticed</p>	<p>23 Choose to give or receive the gift of forgiveness</p>	<p>24 Bring joy to others. Share something which made you laugh</p>
				<p>29 Turn off digital devices and really listen to people</p>	<p>30 Let someone know how much you appreciate them and why</p>	<p>31 Plan some new acts of kindness to do in 2024</p>

## The 12 Days of Christmas - Carol Meaning and Origin



"The Twelve Days of Christmas" is an English Christmas carol that lists a group of increasingly superb gifts given on each of the 12 days of Christmas (the 12 days that make up the Christmas season, starting with Christmas Day). The song, published in England in 1780 without music as a chant or rhyme, is thought to be French in origin. The melodies of collected versions of the carol vary throughout history. The standard tune now associated with it is derived from a 1909 arrangement of a traditional folk melody by English composer Frederic Austin, who introduced the familiar prolongation of the verse "five gold rings".

Modern internet sites and some magazine articles have tried to reduce "The Twelve Days of Christmas" to a simple Christmas carol but many scholars of the Catholic Church deem it a very important surviving example of a time when that denomination used codes to disguise their teachings. Originally a poem written by Catholic clerics, this song was transformed into a carol at a time when celebrating the 12 days of Christmas was one of the most important holiday customs.

Here is a Recovery in Mind version:

Recovery in Mind - 12 events of 2023 - leading up to Christmas....

*On the twelfth day of Christmas 'my' Recovery in Mind gave to me ....*

*Twelve different new courses*

*Eleven Donnington Castle walkers*

*Ten groups a-reading*

*Nine Ashmolean visits*

*Eight bird boxes a-making*

*Seven 'poems competition'*

*Six lino printers*

*Five wet-felt learners*

*Four Students award nominations*

*Three in a 'men's shed'*

*Two students climbing*

*And a sponsored swimmer in a channel crossing!*

Well done everyone!

It's been a good year with loads of opportunities and progress made .... here's to an even better year for 2024! Fiona



## On the thirteenth day of Christmas my true love phoned me up ...

Well, I suppose I should be grateful, you've obviously gone to a lot of trouble and expense - or maybe off your head. Yes, I did like the birds - the small ones anyway were fun if rather messy, but now the hens have roosted on my bed and the rest are nested on the wardrobe. It's hard to sleep with all that cooing, let alone the cackling of the geese whose eggs are everywhere, but mostly in a broken smelly heap on the sofa. No, why should I mind? I can't get any peace anywhere - the lounge is full of drummers thumping tom-toms and sprawling lords crashed out from manic leaping. The kitchen is crammed with cows and milkmaids and smells of a million stink-bombs and enough sour milk to last a year. The pipers? I'd forgotten them - they were no trouble, I paid them and they went. But I can't get rid of these young ladies. They won't stop dancing or turn the music down and they're always in the bathroom, squealing as they skid across the flooded floor. No, I don't need a plumber round, it's just the swans - where else can they swim? Poor things.

When I went to wash my hands one ate the soap, another swallowed the gold rings. And the pear tree died. Too dry. So thanks for nothing, love. Goodbye.

By Dave Calder



## Recovery in Mind Courses Spring Term 2024

December is a great time to start thinking ahead to the New Year and why not start by booking onto a Recovery in Mind course or two to get 2024 off to a great start?

All the following courses can be booked via the website for students who have completed the Welcome to Recovery course. Please do get in touch if you need any help with choosing what to do next.



Here is the link to the booking page [Step 2: All Courses | Recovery in Mind](#)

**16<sup>th</sup> January - Building Your Resilience** - This 4-week course has been developed by the whole Recovery in Mind team, and we'll be looking together at 6 key areas to enable us to 'bounce back' from our challenges and setbacks so that we can 'bounce forward' into the New Year.

**17<sup>th</sup> January - Winter Warmer** - Join us for a 'winter warmer' afternoon of socialising and having fun with suitable indoor activities and refreshments provided.

**18<sup>th</sup> January - New Year, New Beginnings, The Written Word** - Following the success of our first poetry workshop in September, we're offering this 2-week course to reflect together on the new year ahead through enjoying a variety of poetry and having a go at writing our own! An opportunity to express ourselves creatively through the written word.

**23<sup>rd</sup> January - Mindful Sewing** - After the success of this 2-week course in October, we are running it again! Mindful Sewing encourages sewers to forget about perfection and forget about the finished article. Instead, it encourages the idea of enjoying the process of sewing for sewing's sake. It's about the journey, not the destination. It isn't about mending or making garments from a pattern. Neither is it about working towards a goal or a timeframe.

**1<sup>st</sup> February - Winter Creativity Painting Workshop** - Join Sarah and 'get in the flow'.

**6<sup>th</sup> February - Mindfulness Afternoon** - This session will focus on various aspects of mindfulness and give students a chance to experience different ways to practise 'being in the moment' which can be utilised in everyday life.

**8<sup>th</sup> February - Problem Solving** - A standalone workshop providing practical techniques and strategies to learn how to solve everyday problems.

**20<sup>th</sup> February - Reading for Recovery** - Join Gillian and Cath at the library to enjoy reading together. The aim is to enjoy reading and listening to reading; a variety of texts will be explored during this 6-week course. No prior reading is required; just sit back and enjoy the literature and perhaps take a turn at reading if you would like to.

**26<sup>th</sup> February - Winter Festival** - We would like to invite you all to join us for our Winter Festival at Stockcross Village Hall. We have a couple of wonderful creative people coming to lead two workshops that we will all be able to experience during the day. We will also provide lunch, refreshments, and the opportunity to spend a day together with the Recovery in Mind 'tribe'. Creativity, fun and laughter - what could be more perfect for a mid-winter Monday in February (oh and it's been kindly funded by Pangbourne Rotary Club so it's free for any students - past or present - to attend!)





## Peer Trainer Reflections of 2023

We asked our lovely peer trainers for their personal reflections of the last year and here are some of their responses.....

*2023 seems to have flown past so fast. So many great things stand out including our visit to the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford and the magazines we all were able to create. Our allotment sessions in the hazy summer days surrounded by the bright colours of all the plants and vegetation bursting forth. I always enjoy our walks, and one visit to Donnington Castle on a sunny spring day stands out in particular. Most recently it has been a privilege to attend a couple of award events where it's been great to see the hard work of Recovery in Mind and students recognised. To be part of such an amazing organisation is a blessing and a privilege, so thank you to Angela and all the team for providing this brilliant service! Thanks, Nick*

*The "Take Notice" walk to Donnington Castle last May was one of my Highlights of 2023 as it captured what Recovery in Mind is all about.*

*The immediate easy connection between students in the friendly unpressured environment was just so nice to notice and 'feel', and another session really showing how and why Recovery in Mind works.*

*To end the walk there was a general talk about Recovery in Mind, and the courses: what helps, what doesn't? The total inclusion of the students and the team turned this into a really valuable, interesting and important discussion.*

*I felt everyone enjoyed those few hours and gained some valuable learning from them.  
Lynette*



*Hello everyone! My name is Amelia, and I am an Occupational Therapy Student! The past 13 weeks I have been working alongside Recovery in Mind as part of my third year placement! I have thoroughly enjoyed working alongside the team, the peer trainers and the students. Some of you might have met me already and it has been such a pleasure to meet everyone. I have had a wonderful opportunity to take part in all the different courses and workshops and I can definitely say I have learnt a lot.*

*I have been able to explore my creative side which I didn't know I had, as well as learning the importance of looking after yourself and the strategies/tools that can help with your personal recovery journey. My journey with Recovery in Mind has been like no other; it has inspired me in many ways, knowing that anything is possible.*

*I wish everyone the best on their Recovery Journey.  
OT student Amelia*

## Student Creativity

We are always interested and inspired by the creativity of our students. We caught up with Elaine to see how she was preparing for the festive season and she shared a couple of her current projects.

These are the only two things I've done so far. This is a bauble wreath I've made. It's 20cm, but you can make it as big as you want.

I used a circular wire frame (which I bought from Hobbycraft, or you can get them from Amazon) and put a loop of wire so I can hang it up, then wrapped very small tinsel round the wire. Then you just glue or tie the small baubles onto the wire. I used a hot glue gun.



And this is a bauble tree I'm making for a present. It stands 30cm high.

I've again used wire to make the frame, however you can use a polystyrene cone.

Then you just tie the baubles onto the wire.

If you are using a polystyrene cone, then push the top part of the bauble into the cone, maybe using a little bit of glue to secure.

You then just keep putting the baubles on until you are satisfied.

I have got other ideas, but I've not started them yet.....

From Elaine

This photo came from our recent Welcome to Recovery course; we felt it was appropriate to share as it focuses on keeping our wellness in balance over the festive period.



## Congratulations to Alan



Huge congratulations to Alan, a Recovery in Mind student, who won the 'Return to Learning' award at the West Berkshire Learning Achievement Awards 2023 at Shaw House. Well done, Alan, we are all very proud of you! We asked Alan what he was going to do with his prize.....

*For continuing to learn and attend classes I was awarded a £100 prize. I was awarded the prize at a recent ceremony at which friends from Recovery in Mind attended and gave me support.*

*The question arose as to what I spent the £100 on and why. Well, it happened this way.....*

*I had been thinking for a while that it would be good to have D.V.D.s of the comedy " Last of the Summer Wine ". These are now only available as a full set of 58 disks in a pair of robust cases to keep them in. There were 34 series of the comedy, and the series were put on to 58 disks. Having the £100 allowed me to buy the whole set at Circa £75 and leaving some still in the bank.*

*I have already enjoyed having them and seeing some of the later episodes and look forward to using them at dull moments for some years to come. Alan F.*

## Seasonal Creativity

We end this newsletter with a couple of pictures from the lovely seasonal creativity session we had this week led by Sarah.





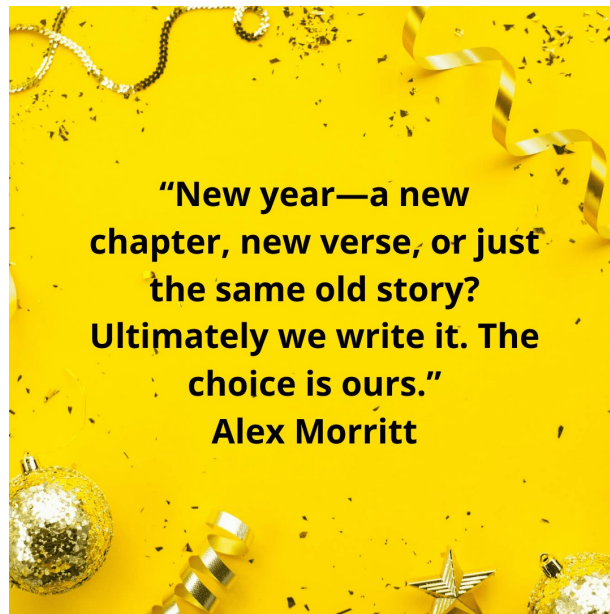
## External Links

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

<https://www.tistheseasonto.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/>



## 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**- 0118 904 3200

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

**Samaritans** - 116 123

**NHS** - 111

999 is for **EMERGENCY** calls only.