



Bromley

Mental Health Hub

Keeping Well In Winter




The holiday season is often a positive time for celebration and connection with the people we care about. However, for those of us struggling with our mental health, this season can be a difficult time of year.

For many people, Christmas can feel stressful and trigger difficult feelings; it may remind us of people, places and things that we may have lost, or memories we find upsetting or are struggling to cope with.

For others, Christmas is an isolating time, for those who have experienced bereavement or loneliness, it can be a season we dread. Some of us even feel at our lowest at Christmas and are at risk of going into crisis because they do not know where to go for support.

This pack is designed to help you feel supported this winter. To help you cope with the difficult days, to stay well, to keep safe, and to know where to turn if you're in crisis.



Managing Your Wellbeing

Christmas can be a magical time of year, providing us with opportunities to do something for ourselves and for others.

It's important to allow yourself the space to enjoy the season by making time to relax, have fun, spend time with others that matter and do things that make you feel good. However, it can be difficult as our normal routines can change and we can feel out of sorts.



For some of us, there is the extra pressure that everything has to be 'perfect'. It's natural to compare ourselves to others, either on social media, on television adverts or even those around us, and this can leave us feeling demoralised or need to reach some form of perfection whether that's through the gifts we buy, what we post online, the clothes we wear, or the food we cook.

Knowing what matters to you is important to keep you feeling grounded and able to appreciate the season.

The following tips have been developed by **Bromley, Lewisham and Greenwich Mind** (2023) to highlight the difference even small steps can make to support your mental health.

Tips to Manage Your Wellbeing

Be **gentle, generous** and **patient** with yourself. You don't have to do more than what suits you this Christmas, we're all different and Christmas is a time to embrace that. It's ok to prioritise what's best for you, even if others don't seem to understand.



Think about **what you need** and how you might be able to get it. Consider talking to someone you trust about what you need to manage your wellbeing.

Think about what might be **difficult** about Christmas for you, and if there's anything that might help you cope better. You may find it helps to write this down.



For example, if you experience panic attacks, flashbacks or disassociation, **make a note of what helps you** in these moments and keep it with you.

If you're worried about going somewhere unfamiliar, think about **things you can bring with you to make you more comfortable**, or where you can go if you need a break.



If you're going to be on your own this Christmas, **plan some things to fill your time**, such as crafts or spending time in nature. **Make some plans for the New Year** so you have something to look forward to.

Looking After Yourself

Learning to **manage your own wellbeing** is a key step in helping improve your mental health. Connecting with others over the challenges you face as well as the things you've achieved is an important way to support your mental health.

If you're worried about the questions people may ask you, **think of some answers in advance** so you're not caught off guard. For example, think about your plans for the holidays or how you're doing.

It's okay to tell someone you don't want to talk about something, or change the subject. If you're worried about ending difficult conversations, it might help to **practise** what you'll say.



It's important to **look after yourself** during the festive period. This can include allowing yourself to **experience your feelings**. Even if they don't match what's happening around you in that moment, they're still real and valid.

Give yourself a **time out**. Do something to forget about Christmas or distract yourself, such as watching a film set in the summer.

Some people find it helpful to set a 'start' and 'finish' time for Christmas in their minds. It's important to remind yourself that it's **not forever**.

If you can't avoid something difficult, **plan something for yourself afterwards** to help reduce the distress you may feel.

Ask for Support

Talking to people you trust, or to someone impartial can help offload the things on your mind and allow you to problem solve.

Let people know if you're struggling. It's common to feel as though you're going through something on your own, but you're not.

Let the people around you know what they can stop, start, or continue doing to help support you. For example, you might want to tell someone what activities you'd like to be involved in, or let them know topics or questions you'd prefer to avoid.



If you don't want to talk to people who are already in your life, you could **join an online or in-person support group or community.** Talking to others who have similar experiences to yours can be a great way to learn and grow.

You may not be able to make others understand what you're going through—that's okay. It's not your responsibility to convince other people, or get their permission to look after yourself.



What's On



Free Church Carol Services

Find out about carol services happening near you—www.achurchnearyou.com

Living Well Bromley

Living Well host food banks, clothes banks, hot meals and more. Why not find out about their volunteering opportunities at www.livingwell.life/p/volunteer

Join the Ramblers!

Bromley Ramblers have a friendly walking group open to people of all ages and abilities. Visit www.ramblers.org.uk or call them on 0208 777 2361

Salad Days x Liv Purvis Christmas Market, Sunday 17th December 11am-4pm

Shop small brands at this Festive market taking place at Beckenham Place Mansion.

Visit www.beckenhamplace.org/whatson/ to find out what's on this December.

Christmas at Crystal Palace Park

The park are running a range of free events over the festive period including Christmas singing, craft sessions and a choir service.

www.crystalpalaceparktrust.org/

Sydenham Garden

A unique wellbeing centre utilising outdoor spaces and nature to aid in people's recovery from physical and mental health problems - www.sydenhamgarden.org.uk

Exhibitions at Bethlem Museum of the Mind, Beckenham

Visit this former hospital and view the inspiring range of art on display in celebration of artists with mental health conditions -

www.museumofthemind.org.uk/whats-on

Christmas Family Fair at Beckenham Place Park, Sat 16th December—Mon 1st January, 11am-6pm

Visit this seasonal family fair in the heart of Beckenham with rides, festive game stalls, Christmas-themed food huts and an opportunity to meet Santa!

Join a club through Simply Connect Bromley

Explore groups and workshops running near you, from chatter & natter cafes, art classes, book groups, acting classes and more - <https://bromley.simplyconnect.uk>

Horniman Museum

Why not visit this iconic museum and explore it's many free exhibits. Find out about cultures around the world, or the beauty of nature by taking a stroll through it's gardens - www.horniman.ac.uk

The Palace Panel Show at the Paxton Centre, Friday 29th December, 7-10pm

A night of comedy regaling the weeks news at the Paxton Centre in Crystal Palace, tickets are just £4. Find out more at www.thepaxtoncentre.co.uk/whatson



My Keeping Well at Christmas Toolkit

Now, reflecting on what you have learned, use this page to note down self-care strategies you can use this winter to keep yourself well.

Things I can do to be gentle to myself...

Things I can do to look after my body and my mind...

Things I can do to connect with others...

Christmas Around The World

Different countries around the world have varied and diverse traditions when it comes to celebrating the festive period, here are just a few...

Philippines

Every year, the city of San Fernando holds **Ligligan Parul** (or **Giant Lantern Festival**) featuring dazzling 'parol' lanterns that symbolize the Star of Bethlehem. Each parol consists of thousands of spinning lights that illuminate the night sky. The festival has made San Fernando the 'Christmas Capital of the Philippines'.

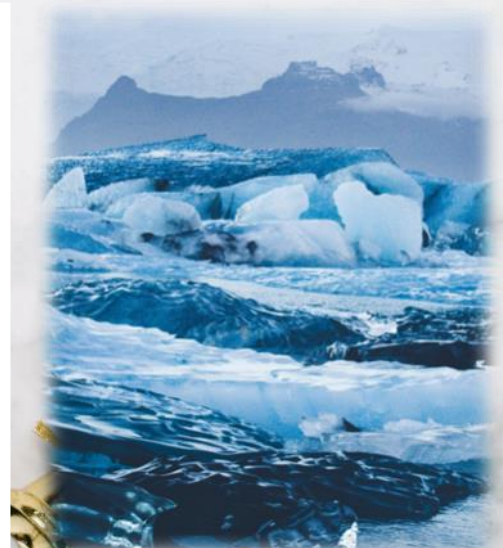


Sweden

The Yule Goat has been a Swedish Christmas symbol dating back to ancient pagan festivals. In 1966, the idea came to build a giant straw goat, now referred to as the **Gävle Goat**. The Gävle Goat is more than 42 feet high, 23 feet wide, and weighs 3.6 tonnes. Each year, the massive goat is constructed in the same spot and fans can watch a livestream from the first Sunday of Advent until after the New Year when it's taken down.

Iceland

In Iceland, it's believed that a giant cat known as the **Yule Cat** roams the snowy landscape at Christmas time. In the past, farmers would use this to incentivise their workers - those who worked hard would receive a new set of clothes, but those who didn't would be devoured by the creature. Today, it is customary for everyone in Iceland to get new clothing for Christmas to avoid an unsavoury demise.



12 Days of Self Care

This festive season, here are 12 days of festive things you can do to support your wellbeing this holiday season.

Three Good Things

Take a moment out of your day to write down three good things that have happened today or in the last week. Keep these as positive reminders if you start to feel low.

Affirmation Cards

Show yourself some compassion by writing down positive affirmations for yourself and stick them around the house in places you'll see them often, like on the fridge or on a mirror.

Keep Your Body Moving!

Keeping your body moving everyday can be good for your wellbeing—whatever the weather! Why not go for a mindful walk in your local park, observe the nature around you and stay present in the moment.

Get Creative!

Try a new festive recipe or DIY your own festive decorations. You could try making your own Christmas cards or learn a new skill by going to a craft class.

Self-Soothe

Take some time out of your day to create a self-soothe box, filled with items that can ground you or distract you if you're feeling overwhelmed. You could include photos, ticket stubs or anything that makes you smile.

Avoid Unhelpful Comparisons

Social media and the people around us can make us feel pressured to celebrate in a 'perfect' way. Instead, try reflecting on what you'd like to do this season and make a wish list of the things you want to achieve.

Create a Positive Playlist

Why not create your own personal playlist filled with music that makes you feel good. It could be festive-themed or whatever lifts your mood and gets you dancing!

Sleep

If you find yourself struggling to get a full nights sleep, try creating a bedtime routine. Start by reducing your screen time and putting in a self-care activity before bed such as a shower or reading.

Mindfulness

Why not try some mindful breathing to relax your mind and body? Find a comfortable space and try 3-4-5 breathing. Breathe in for 3 seconds, hold for 4 seconds, and breathe out for 5 seconds.

Connect with Others

The festive season can be lonely—take the time to try and connect with someone you trust. Maybe arrange to have a cup of tea with a neighbour or call a friend.

Try Something New

Dedicate some time trying something new or learning a new skill, whether that's a new exercise, trying a new food or trying a new hobby.

Spread Kindness!

Good deeds, even small ones, can mean a lot to those around us and they make us feel good too! Why not say hello to a neighbour or smile at someone in the street?

What To Do In A Crisis

Let someone know how you're feeling

If you're feeling unsafe, scared or alone, tell a loved one or a neighbour how you are feeling so they can support you. Talking to others can help us feel less alone and can lighten the load.

Write down the names and numbers of a couple of people you trust and keep them somewhere you can see them to remind you they're there when you need them. Not sure who to call? Reach out to **Samaritans** on **116 123**, they're open 24/7, even on Christmas Day.

Reach out to healthcare professionals for support

If you need professional support regarding your physical or mental health in non-emergency situations, do the following:

- Visit your local pharmacist for support with coughs, colds and other pains.
- Call **NHS 111** if you have an urgent, but non-life threatening issue. They can provide advice or connect you with a clinician.
- Visit your GP if neither of the above meet your needs.

In an emergency, call NHS 999

- If you feel at risk of harm to yourself or others, call the **Oxleas Urgent Advice Line** for immediate support on **0800 330 8590**
- If you have harmed yourself, or you feel actively suicidal or unstable in any way, call **NHS 999** or take yourself to your local **A&E**.
- **Princess Royal University Hospital A&E, Farnborough Hospital, Orpington, BR6 8ND** have a mental health team on duty who can assist you.

Wellbeing Helplines

Samaritans

Emotional, wellbeing and crisis support line.

Tel: [116 123](tel:116123)

www.samaritans.org

SHOUT

Texting service for emotional, wellbeing and crisis support.

Text: 85258

Side By Side (Mind)

Online community for advice, support and connection with others experiencing mental health difficulties.

www.sidebyside.mind.org.uk

Bromley & Croydon Women's Aid (BCWA)

Support for women who have experienced or are at risk of domestic abuse.

Tel: 020 8313 9303

www.bcwa.org.uk

Oxleas Urgent Advice Line

Urgent crisis line for mental health support.

Tel: 0800 330 8590

The Silver Line (Age UK)

24-hour listening service for individuals aged 55+.

Tel: 0800 470 8090

www.thesilverline.org.uk

CALM (Campaign Against Living Miserably)

Mental health support line for men.

Tel: 0800 58 58 58

www.thecalmzone.net

Shelter

Free helpline providing advice and support for people at risk of homelessness.

Tel: 0808 800 4444

www.shelter.org.uk

NHS 111

Non-emergency support.

Tel: 111

NHS 999

Emergency support.

Tel: 999

Bromley Well support residents of Bromley borough to stay emotionally and physically well and remain independent. Their services are free for Bromley borough residents.

<https://www.bromleywell.org.uk/>

Bromley Well

Christmas Helpline Opening 2023/24

Saturday 23rd December - 9am - 5pm

CHRISTMAS EVE Sunday 24th December - CLOSED

CHRISTMAS DAY Monday 25th December - CLOSED

BOXING DAY Tuesday 26th December - CLOSED

Wednesday 27th December - 9am - 5pm

Thursday 28th December - 9am - 5pm

Friday 29th December - 9am - 5pm

Saturday 30th December - 9am - 5pm

NEW YEAR'S EVE Sunday 31st December - CLOSED

NEW YEAR'S DAY Monday 1st January - CLOSED

Tuesday 2nd January - SERVICES RESUME (9am-5pm)

Freephone 0808 278 7898 | www.bromleywell.org.uk