

Keeping Well This Festive Period

The festive season of Christmas and New Year can be a positive time of celebration and connection with people we care about. For those of us struggling with mental health challenges, this season can become an especially difficult time of year.

For many people, Christmas can feel stressful and trigger difficult feelings: it may provide a reminder of people, places and things that we may have lost, find upsetting or are too hard to cope with. For others, Christmas is a time without family or friends to turn to and it represents a period of being alone, and can be dreaded by those of us who have been bereaved or feel that we have no-one around us. Some even feel at their lowest ebb at Christmas time, and end up in crisis because they do not know where else to turn for support.

This pack is designed to help you feel supported this Christmas. To help you cope with the difficult days, to stay well, to keep safe, and to know where to turn in any event that the season leaves you feeling in crisis.



Contents:

Page 2-4: Tips for Keeping Mentally Well

Page 5: What's On?

Page 6: Things to do Ideas

Page 7-8: My Wellbeing Worksheet

Page 9: Christmas Around the World

Page 10: Festive Advent Calendar

Page 11: What to do in Crisis

Page 12: Where to go for help



Top Tips to Help You Cope This Christmas

Christmas can be a nice time of year. The season of Christmas can provide an opportunity to do something for yourself and for others. It is important to allow yourself the space to enjoy it 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 be thrown up in the air and we can feel out of sorts. For some of us, there is the additional pressure that what we value to be important at Christmas may not feel good enough. It is only natural to compare ourselves to others either on social media, through *television* adverts and those around us, and this may leave us feeling demoralised or need to reach some form of perfection with the way we act, the gifts we buy, the things we post online, the clothes we wear, the food we've cooked, the company we keep.

Knowing what our personal values are at Christmas time and what truly matters to us, is important to keep us feeling grounded and able to appreciate the season.

The following tips have been developed by Mind (2021) to highlight the difference small steps can take to supporting your mental health at Christmas. Take a look at this list, and pick one or two that you might focus on this season.

Be gentle, generous and patient with yourself

You don't have to do anything more than what suits you this Christmas, we are 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 cope.



Plan ahead

Think about what might be difficult about Christmas for you, and if there's anything that might help you cope. It might be useful to write this down. For example:

- If you sometimes experience flashbacks, panic attacks or dissociation, make a note of what helps during these moments, and keep it with you.
- If you're going to be somewhere unfamiliar for Christmas, think about what you need to help you cope. Are there things you can bring to make you feel more comfortable? Or is there somewhere you can go to take a break?
- If you're worried about feeling lonely or isolated this Christmas, think of some ways to help pass the time. For example, this might be doing something creative or spending time in nature.
- Try to plan something nice to do after Christmas. Having something to look forward to next year could make a real difference.



Manage relationships

Learning to self-manage your wellbeing is a key step in living well. Connecting with others on the challenges you face and the successes you have is an important part of supporting your mental health. Equally as important is how you manage these conversations and relationships with those around you, especially during this period of time:

- If other people's questions are difficult, you could think of some answers in advance so you're not caught off guard. For example, about your plans or how you're doing.
- Think about how to end difficult conversations. It's ok to tell someone you don't want to talk about something, or to change the subject. It might help to practise what you'll say.





Look after yourself

Below are some ways you can look after yourself this festive period:

- Set a 'start' and 'finish' time for what you count as Christmas. Remind yourself that it won't last forever.
- Let yourself experience your own feelings. Even if they don't match what's going on around you, they're still real and valid.
- Take time out. Do something to forget that it's Christmas or distract yourself. For example, you could watch a film or read a book that's set in the summer. Or you could try learning a new skill.
- If you can't avoid something difficult, plan something for yourself afterwards to help reduce the stress or distress you might feel.

Talking to other people

Talking with people you trust, or to someone impartial can help to offload things that are on your mind and help you problem solve safely.


- Let people know you're struggling. It can often feel like it's just you when it's not
- It doesn't have to be people who are already in your life. You could join an online community to talk others who have similar experiences to yours.
- Tell people what they can stop, start or continue doing to help you. For example, you could let them know any activities you'd like to be involved in, and what they can do to support you during Christmas. Or you could tell them any questions or topics that you find hard to discuss, so they can avoid asking about them.
- You might not be able to make others understand. That's OK. It's not your responsibility to convince other people, or get their permission to look after yourself.

Overall, the message remains clear: be kind and patient with yourself this Christmas season, focus on what matters most to you, find small ways to plan ahead and connect with people if you can so that you do not feel alone. For more support, visit www.mind.org.uk , call their Infoline on 0300 123 3393 or join their online community group Side by Side , visit

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/side-by-side-our-online-community> for more information.



Source: "Christmas and Mental Health", Mind (2021)



What's On?

Christmas Eve - Free Carol Service at your local Church, visit: www.achurchnearyou.com

Every Friday - Free Community Lunch at Living Well, Holy Trinity Church in Penge, SE20 7LX, from 13:00pm. Find out more by visiting: <https://livingwell.life/p/community-lunch>

Christmas Day Service 11AM - 11:45AM - A short service celebrating the joy of Christmas. Suitable for all ages. Everyone welcome - no booking necessary. Bromley Town Church, 2 Ethelbert Road, Bromley, BR1 1JA

Become a Rambler?

Bromley Ramblers have friendly walking groups for people of all ages and abilities that take place all year round, including over this festive period. Call today on: 0208 7772361 or visit: www.ramblers.org.uk for more information.



Quick Tips

- **Keep on top of stress** – keep a to-do list for the week and take three things off that list to achieve each day to help pace yourself and prioritise tasks.
- **Take 30 minutes a day just for you** – dedicate time to yourself each day, even if it is only a shower use this time to focus completely on yourself.
- **Talk to someone** – it's ok not to be ok, let someone know how you are feeling and get it off your chest.



Why not try joining the Bromley Recovery College?

If you like the sound of starting something new in 2023, and would like the opportunity to meet new people along the way, there are a range of opportunities available for you to get involved in at the Recovery College. They provide a regular prospectus of peer and professional led courses and groups that inform and explore ways to manage mental health problems, to help people improve wellbeing, skills and achieve personal goals and ambitions. For more information contact the Recovery College at 01689 603577 or visit: <https://blgmind.org.uk/>



Some ideas of things you could do this Christmas

When managing your wellbeing, it can often be the little things that you forget can make the biggest difference to how you feel – even if it only lifts or changes your mood for a little while. Below are some simple ideas that you could try over the Christmas period.

Enjoy the outdoors and be active

Take a wintery walk and take in the beauty of the outdoors

Try something new like ice skating, or build a snowman

Get outdoors with the family e.g. play a ball game, use bikes or go to the local park

Bundle everyone in the car and take a road trip to see the Christmas lights on display around town – enjoy Christmas music and hot chocolate as you go!



Do something social and connect with others

Make new friends this season becoming part of a church, choir or other social group e.g. at your local village hall, or a carol service

Volunteer your time to help someone else in need this Christmas i.e. a local soup kitchen, or support a local charity at a Christmas event.

Call someone you care about.

Invite someone round for a Christmas drink.



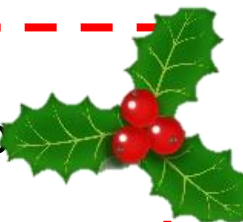
Try something creative

Make your own Christmas cards, crackers, or decorations, look online for inspiration!

Get crafty with D.I.Y presents

Bake festive gifts or treats to share with friends, loved ones and neighbours

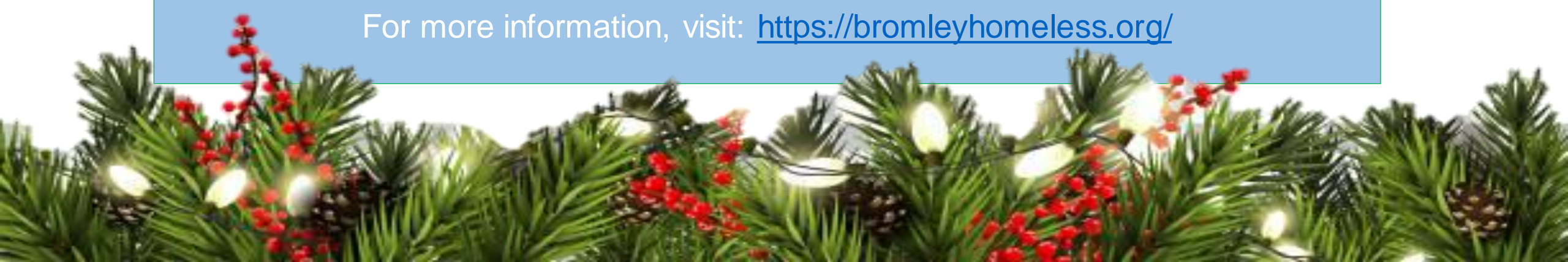
Visit a local Xmas craft fair



Give back or help others

Give back and help others at the Bromley Homeless Shelter this winter: be a cook or a listener.

For more information, visit: <https://bromleyhomeless.org/>





My Keeping Well at Christmas Tool Kit

Use this page to note down self-care strategies that will help you to keep well over Christmas.

Three ways I be gentle, generous and patient with myself...

1

2

3

Three ways I can take care of your body as well as my mind...

1

2

3

Three things I can do to connect with others in a way that feels safe for me...

1

2

3





Three ways I can use planning to help with my wellbeing over Christmas...

1

2

3

Support Over the Winter Months

For more information around support options over the winter months, visit **Bromley Well**: <https://www.bromleywell.org.uk/help-this-winter-2022-2023/>

Bromley Well have created a webpage detailing further information around support for managing cost of living, your health, home & safety and what to do if you are concerned about the safety of somebody else. Their page also has details of all the warm centre's available in Bromley over this period of time



Bromley Well

Christmas Helpline Opening 2022/23

CHRISTMAS EVE	Saturday 24th December - CLOSED
CHRISTMAS DAY	Sunday 25th December - CLOSED
BOXING DAY	Monday 26th December - CLOSED
	Tuesday 27th December - CLOSED
	Wednesday 28th December - 9am - 5pm
	Thursday 29th December - 9am - 5pm
	Friday 30th December - 9am - 5pm
NEW YEAR'S EVE	Saturday 31st December - CLOSED
NEW YEAR'S DAY	Sunday 1st January - CLOSED
	Monday 2nd January - CLOSED
	Tuesday 3rd January - SERVICES RESUME (9am-5pm)

Freephone 0808 278 7898 spa@bromleywell.org.uk



Christmas Around the World

Different countries around the world have varied and diverse traditions when it comes to celebrating Christmas, or the festive period in general. See below for a few examples!:

Japan

Although Christmas isn't a national holiday in Japan (an estimated one percent of the population is Christian) its citizens still find an interesting and delicious way to celebrate. Rather than gathering around the table for a turkey dinner, families head out to their local Kentucky Fried Chicken. The tradition began in 1974 after a wildly successful marketing campaign called "*Kurisumasu ni wa kentakkii!*" or "Kentucky for Christmas!" The fast food chain has maintained its yuletide popularity, causing some people to order their boxes months in advance or stand in two-hour-long lines to get their "finger lickin' good" food.



Finland

On Christmas morning, Finish families traditionally eat a porridge made of rice and milk topped with cinnamon, milk, or butter. Whoever finds the almond placed inside one of the puddings "wins"—but some families cheat and hide a few almonds so the kids don't get upset.

New Zealand

Because summer falls during Christmastime for people of New Zealand, a number of their traditions center around a barbeque, or grill, where families and friends gather for a casual cookout of fresh seafood, meat, and seasonal vegetables. The New Zealand Christmas tree is the Pohutukawa, a coastal species that blooms a bright-red color in December, providing shade during the sunny days.



FESTIVE ADVENT CALENDAR

This festive season, here are 12 days of festive themed wellbeing tips and activities.

1



Avoid unhelpful comparisons!

Social media and those around us can make us feel pressured to celebrate the festive season in a 'perfect' way! Why not reflect and make a wish list of all the things you would like to do this festive season?

2



Affirmation cards!

Start this festive season by showing yourself some kindness and compassion. Why not write some positive affirmations to yourself and stick them around the house where you'll see them regularly.

3



Keep your body moving and be mindful!

Keeping your body moving a little everyday can be good for your wellbeing...whatever the weather why not go for a mindful walk in your Local Park. Try to take notice of the nature around you and stay present!

4



Connect with others!

Sometimes the festive season can be quite lonely. If you can, try and connect with someone you trust. Perhaps a cuppa with a neighbour or a call with a loved one

5



Positive playlist!

Why not create your own personal playlist filled with music that makes you feel good! It could be festive themed or whatever fills you with joy (and gets you dancing)!

6



Three good things!

Take a moment in the day, and write three good things that have happened today or during the last week. Keep these as a reminder to you if you start to feel low!

7



Sleep!

Make sure you're well rested this festive season. If you find yourself struggling with getting a full night's sleep, why not try a new bedtime routine. Start by reducing your screen time, and putting in a self-care activity just before bed like a shower or a couple of pages of your favourite book.

8



Self-soothe!

Take some time out in the day to create yourself a self-soothe box, filled with items that can help distract you and feel grounded when you are feeling overwhelmed. Not sure how? Google "how to make a self-soothe box".

9



Get Creative!

Try a new festive recipe or DIY your own festive decorations.

10



Take some time out!

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.

11



Try something new!

You could try and learn a new skill or try something you've always wanted to try. You could learn an instrument, try a new exercise, try a new cuisine or a new hobby!

12



Spread kindness!

Small good deeds can mean a lot and can make you feel great too! Why not smile or say hello to a stranger or your neighbour!

Knowing what to do in a crisis

Step One: Let someone know how you are feeling

If you are feeling unsafe, scared, or alone, it may be important to let someone know how you are feeling so that they can support you. Often when we feel this way, talking, or being listened to by someone we know, or even a neighbour, can help remind us that we are not alone. Think of two or three people that you could really connect with over the holidays. Write down their names and numbers on a piece of paper and keep it somewhere you can see it to remind you they are there when you need them. It may help to also let them know they are one of your key contacts so that they can be prepared to receive that call, or knock at the door and can also manage your expectations safely if they cannot speak straight away. Not sure who to ring? The Samaritans are there for you on 116 123, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, or text "SHOUT" to 85258 to be connected to a crisis counsellor immediately by text messenger.



Step Two: Consider if NHS-111 might be able to help you

Use the following steps if you require professional support regarding your mental or physical health in non-emergency situations. **Step A:** Visit your local pharmacist. Pharmacists are experts in medicines who can help you with minor health concerns including coughs, colds, tummy aches and other pains. **Step B: Call NHS-111.** If you feel like you have an urgent but non-life threatening issue, instead of worrying, self-diagnosing or second guessing, call 111. They can give you appropriate advice, connect you with a clinician, and direct you to the relevant service if necessary. **Step C:** If steps A and B do not meet your needs, and if advised, visit your GP.

Step Three: Remember there is always support in an emergency

In the event of an emergency, please use the following steps to access help quickly:

- **Step A:** If you feel at risk of harm to yourself or others contact the Oxleas Mental Health Urgent Advice Line for immediate support on: 0800 330 8590, if you need support out of office hours call: 0845 608 0525. Alternatively contact, Support Line UK on: 01708 765 200 or visit their website for more practical support and advice: www.supportline.org.uk
- **Step B:** If you have harmed yourself, feel actively suicidal or if you feel unstable in any other way, please contact 999-Ambulance. Or, if you feel able or someone can assist you, access A&E at the Princess Royal Hospital, Farnborough Common, Orpington, [BR6 8ND](http://www.nhs.uk). There is a Mental Health Team on duty here and they will be able to assist you.
- **Step C:** If you feel at risk due to the behaviours of others, contact 999-Police, or if you need social support contact Adult Early Intervention Team Bromley on: 020 8461 7777 or 07908715749 (9am to 5pm) or call the Emergency Duty Team out of office hours on: **0250 8464 4848.**



Wellbeing helplines

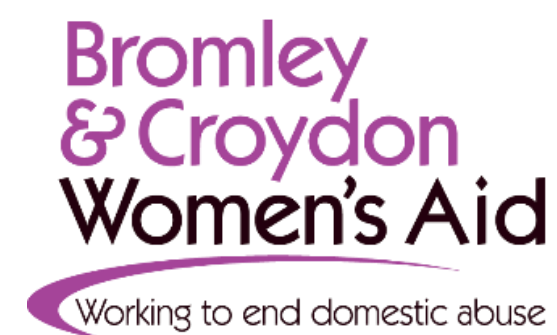
The Samaritans

This is a national charity providing emotional, listening support to any person, at any age, who feels alone, down or in crisis at any time of day or night. You can reach them 24/7, including Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day. You are not alone. **Freephone:** 116 123 to talk to someone right now **Website:** <https://www.samaritans.org/>



Bromley and Croydon Women's Aid

This is a charity established to provide emotional support, information, advice and advocacy for any woman at risk of harm or victimisation as a result of domestic abuse, assault or harassment. The service will be open throughout the Christmas season. **Domestic Abuse Helpline (24/7):** 0808 2000 247 (Freephone). **Website:** <http://www.bcwa.org.uk/>. If you are experiencing any symptoms of post-traumatic stress relating to an abusive relationship, consider reaching out to PTSD UK for more support on how experiences such as flashbacks or dissociations.



The Silver Line

This is a listening service set up to provide emotional information, advice and support to any person over 55 who needs to talk to someone. The service is available 24/7 all 365 days of the year. **Freephone:** 0800 4 70 80 90. **Website:** www.thesilverline.org.uk. If you are seeking practical support or advice and are over the age of 60, consider contacting Age UK Bromley and Greenwich for more support on 0208 315 1850.



The Mix

This is a charity providing emotional support and advice to any young person up to the age of 25. They offer online counselling, telephone counselling, web chats and forums, as well as support and advice resources on their website. **Freephone:** 0808 808 4994. **Website:** www.themix.org.uk. **Text:** 'THEMIX' to 85258. If you are aged 35 or under and feel suicidal, the charity Papyrus may be able to help you. Contact their HOPELINE for support today on: 0800 068 4141.



Shelter

If you or someone you know is at risk of homelessness this winter, we urge you to get some advice through Shelter. Their helpline can provide you with confidential, expert advice, call freephone 0808 800 4444. Alternatively, Crisis can provide support to access housing and employment, visit www.crisis.org.uk. Or to report someone homeless right now, call 999, visit Streetlink for urgent help <https://www.streetlink.org.uk/> or contact the Bromley Homeless Shelter on 07806 602 347.

