



## Keeping Well in Winter – Bromley Well



**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 challenging time of year.**

For many, 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.

For others, Christmas can be a period of isolation; for those who have experienced loneliness or bereavement, it can be a season they dread. Some may even feel at their lowest in winter and are at risk of going into crisis because they don't 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, keep safe, and 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 things for ourselves and others.



It's important to allow yourself the space to enjoy the season by making time to relax, have fun, spend time with others who are important to us, and do things that makes us feel good. This can sometimes be difficult to do when our normal routines change, and we feel out of sorts.



For some of us, there is the extra pressure that everything must be 'just right'. It's natural to compare ourselves to others, either on social media, television adverts or even the people we spend time with.



This can leave us feeling demoralised or reaching for some sort of perfection, whether this is through the gifts we buy, what we post online, the clothes we wear, or the food we cook.



Know what matters to **you** is important to keep yourself grounded and able to appreciate the season.

The following tips have been developed by **South East London Mind** to highlight the differences even small changes can make to improve your wellbeing.





## 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 okay 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 access it. Consider talking to someone you trust about what you need to manage your wellbeing during the holidays.

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

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 new or 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 to improving 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 holiday 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 **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 any distress you may feel.**



## Ask for Support

**Talking to people you trust, or to someone impartial, can help you to 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 doing, start doing, or continue to do to support you.** For example, you might want to let someone know 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

## 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 its gardens - [www.horniman.ac.uk](http://www.horniman.ac.uk)

## 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](http://www.sydenhamgarden.org.uk)

## 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>



## Living Well Bromley

Living Well host food banks, clothes banks, hot meals and more. Why not find out about their volunteering opportunities - [www.livingwell.life/p/volunteer](http://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](http://www.ramblers.org.uk) or call them on **0208 777 2361**

## Free Church Carol Services

Find out about carol services happening near you - [www.achurchnearyou.com](http://www.achurchnearyou.com)

## 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](http://www.museumofthemind.org.uk/whats-on)



# 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.



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



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



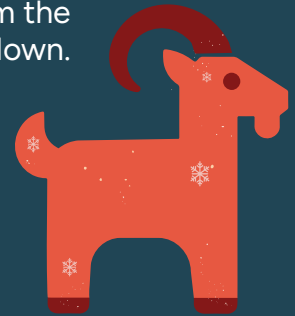
Things I can do to **connect** with others...



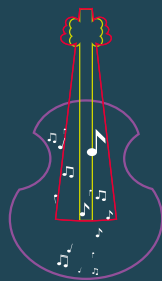
Different countries around the world have varied and diverse traditions when it comes to celebrating the festive period. Here are just a few...

## Sweden

The Yule Goat has been a Swedish Christmas symbol dating back to ancient pagan festivals. In 1966, the idea came about 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. The massive goat is constructed in the same spot every year and fans can watch it via livestream from the first Sunday of Advent until after the New Year when it's taken down.

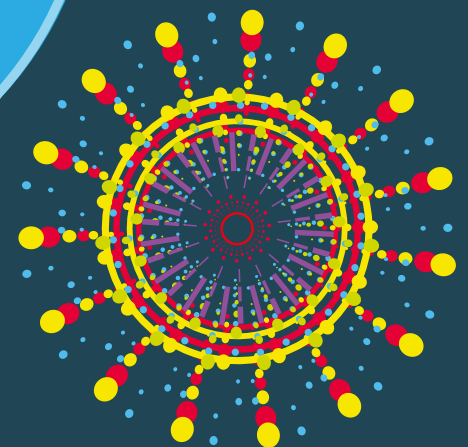


# Christmas Around the World



## The Dominican Republic

You won't see any fir trees as part of the festivities held in the Dominican Republic; thanks to their warm climate, they decorate with **Charamicos** (a dry tree branch). Traditionally, Charamicos were small Christmas trees made from straw, branches and wood and painted white to represent snow, but now they're available in all shapes, sizes and colours. A Dominican Christmas usually involves attending **Aguinaldos**, informal parties which start in one house and move from house to house as more people join in – expect lots of singing, dancing, food and drink.



## The 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 is made up of thousands of spinning lights that illuminate the night sky. The festival has made San Fernando the 'Christmas Capital of the Philippines'.



# 12 Days of Self Care

We've pulled together a list of 12 days of festive things you can do to support your wellbeing this winter.



## 1 Three Good Things

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



## 2 Affirmation cards

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



## 3 Keep your body moving!

Keeping your body moving every day 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.



## 4 Get creative

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



## 5 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. Why not include photos, ticket stubs, or anything that makes you smile.



## 6 Avoid unhelpful comparisons

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

## 7 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!



## 8 Sleep

If you find yourself struggling to get a full night 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.



## 9 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.



## 10 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.



## 11 Try something new

Dedicate some time to trying something new or learning a new skill. You could try cooking a new food or exploring a hobby you've always been curious about.



## 12 Spread kindness!

Good deeds, even small ones, can mean a lot to those in our community 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

**In an emergency, call NHS 999**

- If you feel at risk of harming 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.

**Let someone know how you're feeling**

If you're feeling scared, alone, or unsafe, tell a loved one or a neighbour how you're 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 easy to find, like on your fridge, so 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 with 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

# Wellbeing Helplines



## Samaritans

Emotional, wellbeing and crisis support line.

☎ **Tel: 116 123**

[www.samaritans.org](http://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.

<https://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](http://www.bcwa.org.uk)

## The Silver Line (Age UK)

24-hour listening service for people aged 55+.

☎ **Tel: 0800 470 8090**

[www.thesilverline.org.uk](http://www.thesilverline.org.uk)

## CALM (Campaign Against Living Miserably)

Mental health support line for anyone affected by suicide or suicidal thoughts.

☎ **Tel: 0800 58 58 58**

[www.thecalmzone.net](http://www.thecalmzone.net)

## Shelter

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

☎ **Tel: 0808 800 4444**

[www.shelter.org.uk](http://www.shelter.org.uk)

## NHS 111

Non-emergency support. Choose option '2' for mental health support.

☎ **Tel: 111**

**In an emergency, call NHS 999**

- If you feel at risk of harming 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.

# Bromley Well Christmas Opening Hours

**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 2024/25

**Monday 23rd December: 9am–5pm**

**CHRISTMAS EVE Tuesday 24th December: 9am–5pm**

**CHRISTMAS DAY Wednesday 25th December: CLOSED**

**BOXING DAY Thursday 26th December: CLOSED**

**Friday 27th December: CLOSED**

**Saturday 28th December: CLOSED**

**Sunday 29th December: CLOSED**

**Monday 30th December: 9am–5pm**

**NEW YEAR'S EVE Tuesday 31st December: 9am–5pm**

**NEW YEAR'S DAY Wednesday 1st January - CLOSED**

**Thursday 2nd January - SERVICES RESUME (9am–5pm)**

**Freephone 0808 278 7898 | [www.bromleywell.org.uk](http://www.bromleywell.org.uk)**

Brochure created by Bromley Mental Health Hub, a service run in partnership by:



[mentalhealthhubs.org.uk](http://mentalhealthhubs.org.uk)