



Wellbeing at Christmas

There are lots of reasons why the festive period can be a particularly difficult time for people experiencing low mood or anxiety. These might include:

- Financial stress
- The pressures to feel happy and cheerful when really you're not enjoying things everyone else seems to be.
- Loneliness
- Difficult family situations
- If someone close to you has died then holidays without them can be a really painful time
- We can lose the structure and routine which usually keeps us more stable- you might have time off work, or holidays from studying, or your usual hobbies and activities are less available, which means it can be harder to distract yourself
- Less access to services over Christmas who usually support you
- Shorter, darker days over Christmas and bad weather can affect our mood
- Busy shops and public places can be particularly chaotic over Christmas which can make us feel anxious and panicky

Tips and Tricks to Improve Wellbeing

Routine and Structure

- Try to maintain some sort of routine by planning your time from day to day. OK, so your options for what is available might change, but think about what you still could do to fill the time- watch a film, have a bath, or catch up with a friend. If we have empty days where we are less distracted we might dwell more on any negative thoughts or worries.

Get Organised

- If you have a lot of stuff to organise- cooking Christmas dinner, or Christmas shopping for example- try making a list of what you need to do and dividing it into small chunks. Tackling one chunk at a time is going to feel more achievable and you are therefore more likely to do it.

Winter Sun

- Getting some sunlight on a daily basis can improve serotonin levels- this is the “happy hormone” which boosts our mood. Trying to get out in the daylight even for just a few minutes can improve our mood as well as make us feel more awake and energised.

Eat Well

- Christmas is often a time associated with eating and drinking more than usual, but be mindful of how this affects you. Overeating can make us feel sluggish and lethargic, and alcohol is a depressant. Therefore if you already feel low, then drinking will make you feel even worse as well as leaving you with a hangover the next day.

Stay Active

- Trying to maintain some exercise is another way of increasing our serotonin levels. This can include snowballing in the snow with the kids, dancing at a work Christmas party or just going for a brisk walk to the shop to buy some mince pies.

Keep a Comfort Box

- Keep a box of things which you have learned make you feel better, and keep it for a time when you really need it. Some examples for things in it could be: some chocolate, a bath bomb, a CD of music which makes you feel better, a cuddly toy, some photos of happy memories, a list of things that someone who loves you says they like about you.

SAMARITANS

Need someone to talk to?

Samaritans are still open 24/7 over the holiday period to offer emotional support. They can be contacted free on 116 123 or emailed at jo@samaritans.org. You can also pop in and speak to someone face to face in the branch which is at 11 College Place, London Road between 10am-10pm.

Helping others can really boost how we feel. Here are local places which seek volunteers over Christmas (looks great on your CV too). www.do-it.org.uk is a great online database for searching local volunteering opportunities.

Salvation Army- Christmas Present Appeal- donate presents to help children, the homeless, older people in the community.

The Salvation Army also serves Christmas dinners and also organises food parcels for people in need. www.salvationarmy.org.uk

Carers in Southampton can also get a free Christmas dinner. Tel: 023 8058 2387.



Crisis UK- The charity needs help with welcoming guests, serving food, cooking, co-ordinating food deliveries and a whole host of other tasks. www.crisis.org.uk

Vitalise centres provides respite care for people with severe disabilities. They're currently looking for volunteers at their Southampton centres. www.vitalise.org.uk

Save a life, give blood- Blood banks are often short of blood supplies over the festive season. www.blood.co.uk



Local animal shelters- are often inundated at Christmas with unwanted Christmas pets and would appreciate donations of old blankets or pet foods/toys.

Early warning signs of my mood getting worse:

What I can do to make myself feel better:

Who I can contact if I need to talk:

GP:

Out of hours GP: 111

Samaritans: 116 123

Friends/family: