

# winter wellbeing

Our top tips and ideas to help you look after your wellbeing this winter

2020

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# Winter wellbeing ❄️

As the nights are drawing in, the weather is getting colder and there is ongoing uncertainty about what Christmas and other seasonal celebrations are going to look like, it is more important than ever to make looking after our wellbeing a priority. Remember to be kind to yourself, and take each day as it comes. Incorporating the Five Ways to Wellbeing - **Connect, Be Active, Give, Keep Learning and Take Notice** into your daily life will help support your wellbeing and help you to make the most from the winter season. ❄️ ❄️

\* **Covidbrightonhove.org.uk** is an online Coronavirus help directory for Brighton & Hove residents, where you can find up to date information on services available. Alternatively, if you need help for yourself or someone else because of Covid-19 you can visit Brighton and Hove City Council: [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/request-help-yourself-someone-else](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/request-help-yourself-someone-else) or you can call **01273 293117**.

\* **Connect.** For many people, festive celebrations lend themselves to connecting, so do send Christmas cards, text New Year wishes and connect with others. As the winter draws in, it feels easier to stay inside and out of the cold. Take advantage of a sunny day, wrap up warm and connect with those around you: just being outside in a different environment can make you feel more connected to the outside world. Christmas can be a difficult time and you may be missing loved ones who are no longer with you. If you need support to help you cope with a bereavement you can call **Cruse Bereavement Care: 01273 234007**. The festivities this year may feel different as we may not be able to meet up in big social groups or for community events, so think about other ways of connecting during this period. Plan a phone call or a video call, share good wishes and kind messages, share recipes and cooking tips, and share some jokes and laughter.

\* **Take Notice.** Celebrate the seasons and bring the light in on 21st December for the Winter Solstice. Notice the festive lights as they go up in windows and streets, savour the moment and stop and look at the colours around you. Notice the trees changing from autumn to winter, the shapes that the branches make and the silhouettes that they make against the sky. Notice when the sun pops out, and rainbows after the rain and get out and enjoy the crisp sunny days that winter provides. Notice how warm you are when you come back inside and how a hot drink on a cold day comforts you. ❄️

\* **Be active.** Physical activity releases many feel-good chemicals (endorphins) which can help you to feel happy, relaxed and boost your mood, reduce anxiety and depression and improve self-esteem. Try activities such as walking along the seafront, gardening or dancing. You don't even need to go outside - you can do simple activities in your home that you enjoy, any amount of physical activity is better than none and can lift your spirits. Go for a 'walk and talk' with a friend (following current Government guidelines regarding meeting people). Research indicates that exercise can help to boost your immune system, which can help you to fight off colds and flu viruses. Incorporating more physical activity into your day can alleviate the symptoms of your stress and help you to gain more control when coping with difficult situations.

\* **Give.** Do something kind for a friend, or a stranger. A small act of kindness such as thanking someone, a smile, letting people know you are available to have a chat and offering your time are all small ways of giving. Being linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and can create a sense of belonging and make you feel more connected to the people around you. There are lots of ways you can give to your community. Reach out to your local Covid Mutual Aid group, find out about local volunteering opportunities at charities supporting homeless and isolated people this Christmas. A friendly chat can make all the difference to someone, and can be rewarding for you both and boost your sense of wellbeing. Don't forget to be kind to yourself too, take time to relax and do what makes you feel good.

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\* **Keep learning.** Try something new - you could try a new craft and make some thoughtful gifts or cards in time for the festive giving period. Cold winter evenings are a good time to re-discover an old interest, something you enjoyed in the past but have put aside – a game of chess, a new card game, knitting or drawing. Give yourself a small challenge you will enjoy achieving, which will also in turn improve your confidence. Experiment with new food and try out some seasonal new recipes, winter is a good time to make some wholesome warming meals. Take time to try out making jams and preserves- these can even double up as Christmas or birthday presents.

\* **Going virtual...** Since the first lockdown in March, there has been a huge shift to life online which can feel very daunting and inaccessible to some. There is a lot of support out there through online groups, and a whole virtual life to engage with. **Digital Brighton & Hove** can support individuals and groups with barriers to digital. If you need guidance and support to access a device or get connected during the pandemic, you can call them on 07475945084 or visit [www.digitalbrightonandhove.org.uk/covid-19-network-response/](http://www.digitalbrightonandhove.org.uk/covid-19-network-response/)

\* **'Tis the season...to eat well!** Winter and the festive period have become synonymous with overindulgence. Therefore where possible it is important to maintain a good balance of fruit, vegetables, carbohydrates, protein and omega 3 sources. Maintaining a healthy diet and weight can improve your mood and prevent symptoms of lethargy and irritability that many of us feel during the dark winter months. Everyone deserves a treat but try not to overindulge! If you find yourself craving a sugary treat, try a juicy clementine or sweet dried fruits such as dates or raisins instead. Enjoy warming dinners with lots of veg. Visit the **Real Junk Food Project** ([www.realjunkfoodbrighton.co.uk](http://www.realjunkfoodbrighton.co.uk)) which runs pay as you feel cafes, often with lots of fruit and veg available, freeing up some of your weekly food budget. **Chomp** provide food during school holidays for families who are eligible for free school meals. They are looking at options for how this can be provided during the Christmas holidays and beyond. Email [chomp@onechurchbrighton.org](mailto:chomp@onechurchbrighton.org) for more information.

\* **Be aware of your alcohol consumption!** The celebratory spirit of Christmas and New Year often involves social drinking and you may also find yourself drinking more through lockdown. Although the consumption of alcohol might make you feel more relaxed, it is important to remember that alcohol is a depressant and drinking too much can cause low mood, irritability or potentially aggressive behaviour. It can also disturb your sleeping patterns. By not exceeding the recommended number of safe units, you may be more able to sustain good mental and physical wellbeing. Try not to use alcohol to block difficult feelings. Be aware that alcohol may affect medication you are taking. If you feel your alcohol consumption may be a problem, contact **Change Grow Live** for advice and support. You can call them on **01273 731900** or visit [www.changegrowlive.org](http://www.changegrowlive.org).

\* **Keep cosy indoors...** Practice self-care. Create a cosy environment of candle light and lamp lights, remembering of course to use candles safely. Avoid long naps though! Brighton and Hove Energy Services Co-op (BHESCO) will still be providing a **free winter energy advice service**, from helping to find a cheaper energy tariff, applying for the £140 Warm Home Discount or tackling existing debt from energy companies. Referrals can be made by calling **01273 284472** or by emailing [dan@bhesco.co.uk](mailto:dan@bhesco.co.uk).

\* **Get outside...** With shorter days and longer nights, be sure to see daylight each day, and if possible, get outside for fresh air. How about joining **Health Walks** winter walking challenge? You can give them a call on **01273 294 589** to find out more. If you can, get out with family, friends, or a wintery walk along the beach or through the park. Getting out and about trying new things is a good way to break sedentary routines that can build up if you are indoors a lot. Visit the South Downs National Park which surrounds Brighton and Hove and take in some of the natural beauty on our doorstep.

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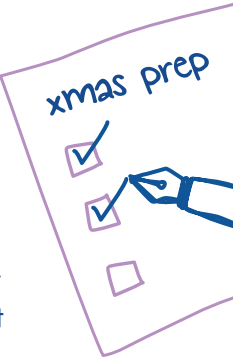
\* **Money...** In the current economic climate, with people being furloughed and small businesses having to close, many people are experiencing financial difficulties and worries. Remember if you are planning to buy Christmas gifts, they don't have to cost a lot of money. There are lots of great charity shops offering lower cost gifts, and support local businesses where possible, many of which are still open online. Alternatively making something yourself can be appreciated just as much, if not more so because of the extra thought that has gone into it. If you would like some support and advice around managing money get in touch with **Money Advice Plus** on **0800 988 7037**.



\* **Rest and sleep...** With many of us having a change of routine during Christmas and the New Year, and with the shorter days of winter, our sleep patterns can be disturbed. There is significant evidence on the link between sleep and mental wellbeing, showing that improvements in the quality of your sleep, could result in improvements to your overall mental health. There are several steps you can take towards achieving a better night's sleep. These include detaching yourself from devices, avoiding caffeine and swapping to herbal teas to help relax, doing regular exercise and taking measures to alleviate your stress. Make time to relax and take some time to yourself. Some simple breathing exercises can help or just 10-15 mins away from everything, reading a book, going for a walk, having a bath, or watching a film!



\* **Shopping and preparations...** This year will be particularly challenging with managing shopping. Plan ahead and write a list. Lists can help keep you organised and crossing items off when you have done them will give you a sense of achievement. Do one thing at a time. Don't try to do everything yourself – ask family, friends or neighbours to help if you can. If you feel agitated or anxious visiting the shops, or if you are shielding, visit small local shops and businesses that aren't busy, or shop online to avoid the crowds. The Artists Open Houses winter festival which is also online this year, is a good opportunity for a more relaxed gift buying experience, as well as connecting with the local community. Remind yourself everyone's Christmas is different and special in its own way, and many people find this time of year difficult - don't be fooled into pressuring yourself to keep up with the glossy ads!



A few top tips from members of our Connecting in Nature group on how they make the most of winter...

- \* "Listen to music. Music at Christmas and seeing all the churches is really uplifting"
- \* "Keeping a list of all the good things about winter... long walks along the seafront enjoying how quiet it is, and dogs in coats!"
- \* "I love getting cosy. Tea and toast, blankets and cushions."
- \* "Making sure to get out in daylight! Still important to get outside and go for a walk in the light."

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\* If you are experiencing a crisis with your mental health, please call the **Sussex Mental Health Line** on **0300 5000 101** (24/7 support) or the **Mental Health Rapid Response Service** on **0300 304 0078** (24/7 support).

\* Download the **#StayAlive app** ([www.prevent-suicide.org.uk](http://www.prevent-suicide.org.uk)) or contact **The Samaritans** on **116 123**.

\* If you feel unwell or are worried about someone else please **call your GP** or contact **NHS 111**

\* For **further information about mental health** and wellbeing, for yourself or someone you care for and for information about services across the city, please:

\* **Visit [www.mindcharity.co.uk](http://www.mindcharity.co.uk)** or call Mind in Brighton and Hove on **01273 66 69 50**.

\* **Visit [www.communityroots.org.uk](http://www.communityroots.org.uk)** or call Community Roots on **0808 195 1768**.



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Wishing you a healthy and happy 2021 from everyone at Mind in Brighton and Hove.

e: [info@mindcharity.co.uk](mailto:info@mindcharity.co.uk) • appointments available