



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. *

* **Coronavirus (COVID-19) – help and support**

East Sussex County Council's website has lots of information about services that are supporting people during the pandemic – www.eastsussex.gov.uk. Alternatively, if you need help for yourself or someone else because of Covid-19 you can call Hastings Borough council on **01424 45 1019** or you can visit their website: www.hastings.gov.uk/my-council/covid19/help.

* **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: 01323 642942**. 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 from being outside in the cold 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, decrease 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 some 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. **East Sussex Libraries** offer 'IT For You' which can help you learn to use a computer and support you with basic IT skills please call **01323 453759** for further information. The **Learn My Way** website (www.goodthingsfoundation.org/learn-my-way) offers free courses to learn digital skills and information to stay safe and connected online. Or you can visit the **Make it Click** website at <https://makeitclick.learnmyway.com/directory> to find resources and information to improve your digital skills.

* **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 any medication that you are taking. If you feel your alcohol consumption may be a problem, contact **STAR Service East Sussex** for advice and support. You can call them on **0300 3038160** or visit www.changegrowlive.org/star-drug-alcohol-service-east-sussex/hastings

* **'Tis the season...to eat well!** Winter and the festive period has 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. Why not try a free cookery course?

Bags of Taste are offering Hastings residents a free ingredients bag and materials to take part in an online two week cookery course - look them up at <https://www.bagsoftaste.org/virtual/> or call **07923 248 586**. Many people are experiencing financial difficulties and may need a little helping hand with the odd meal and The Hope Kitchen in Hastings is offering free take away soup and a sandwich on Thursdays and Saturdays from 7.30pm to 8.45pm on the steps outside Wellington Square Baptise Church. **Foodbanks** are open across East Sussex - you can look up your local foodbank at <https://hastings.foodbank.org.uk/> or contact **0800 208 2138** to find information about your local foodbank.

* **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! **Energise Sussex Coast** are providing a free winter energy advice service, from helping you find a cheaper energy tariff, to applying for the £140 Warm Home Discount or tackling existing debt from energy companies. You can find them at www.energisesussexcoast.co.uk or call on **01424 390 062** for energy advice.

* **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 trying the **1-2-3 Walks East Sussex** each walk has a map and you can find all the maps on their Facebook: www.facebook.com/123walks. 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 local country parks and nature reserves and take in some of the natural beauty on your 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.

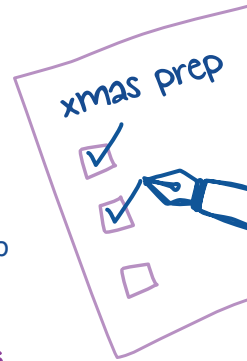
If you would like some support around managing your money please visit the mental health and money website: www.mentalhealthandmoneyadvice.org where you will find lots of helpful information and a free money advice toolkit.



* **Rest and sleep...** With many of us having a change of routine during Christmas and the New Year, and with shorter days of winter, our sleep patterns can be disturbed. There is significant evidence on the link between sleep and mental wellbeing, meaning 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 sitting down to watch a film!



* **Shopping and preparations...** This year will be particularly challenging with managing shopping. **Plan ahead and write a list.** Lists can help you get 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. **Hastings Independent Press** have a list of local independent online shops at www.hastingsindependentpress.co.uk/community/the-hip-shoplocal-list. 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).

* Download the **#StayAlive** app (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**

* **Southdown's East Sussex Community Network Wellbeing Centres** and Peer Support Service will continue to offer 1:1 telephone support, a virtual timetable and small group support during December and leading up to Christmas (and including 29th, 30th and 31st December). The service supports clients to get well, stay well and prevent crisis. For more information visit: www.southdown.org/WellbeingCentresESCN

* **Southdown's Staying Well Service** is an out of hour's mental health crisis prevention service. Open 7 days a week, the service provides evening and weekend, recovery-focused support to help you manage your mental health, stay well and prevent crisis. The service is available for adults (16+) living in East Sussex with urgent mental health support needs. Email them at: stayingwell.eastbourne@southdown.org or call freephone **0800 023 6475**
Website: www.southdown.org/StayingWellSpaceESCN

* For further information about mental health and wellbeing, for yourself or someone you care for and for information about services across Brighton and Hove and East Sussex, please visit: www.mindcharity.co.uk or call us on **01273 66 69 50**.

 @mindbrighton

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