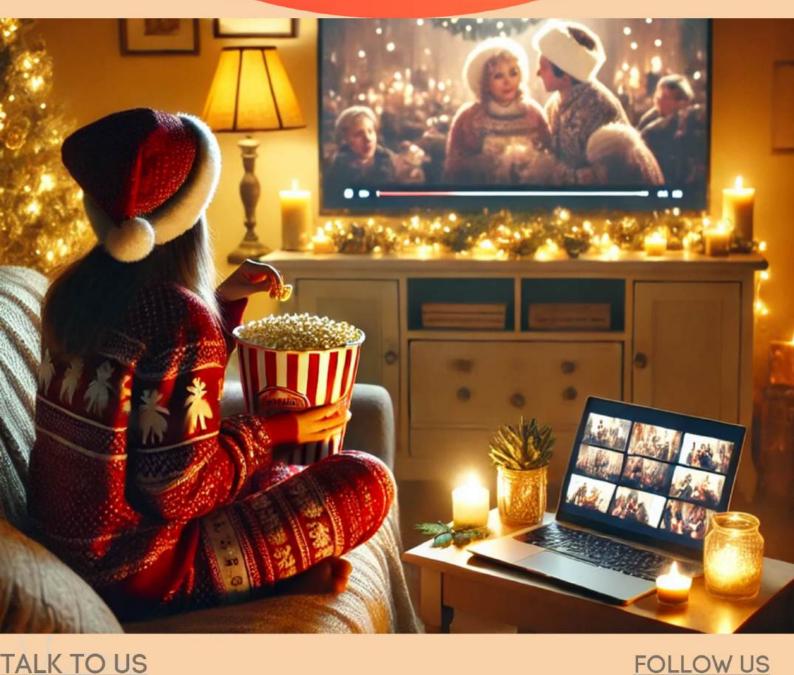
Natural health & living magazine



COMPANION MAGAZINE

DECEMBER 2024

Being alone doesn't need to be lonely



TALK TO US



Finding Light in the Festive Season: Embracing Yourself and the Little

<u>Joys</u>

The festive season is often portrayed as a time of togetherness, love, and abundance. Yet, for many, it can amplify feelings of loneliness and introspection. If this season finds you navigating such feelings, know that you are not alone—and that the holidays can also be a time to reconnect with yourself and find gratitude in the smallest of joys.

The Magic of Stillness

As the world bustles with holiday parties, family gatherings, and gift exchanges, it's easy to feel out of step if your experience doesn't mirror this imagery. However, there's power in stillness—moments where you can reflect on the beauty that surrounds you.

Whether it's the soft glow of fairy lights illuminating your room, the crisp winter air on an evening walk, or the aroma of spiced candles, these small, sensory experiences are gifts in themselves. They remind us that joy isn't always grand; sometimes, it's found in the simple things, like the first sip of a warm drink or the comfort of a favourite blanket.



Gratitude: The Gift You Give Yourself

Practicing gratitude, even when it feels challenging, can transform the way you experience the season. Start small: make a list of five things you're thankful for each day. It could be as simple as the kindness of a stranger, a call from a friend, or even the weather holding up for a peaceful walk.

These small acknowledgments build a foundation for self-compassion. You start to notice the abundance in your life, even in unexpected places. Remember, being grateful doesn't mean ignoring the difficulties you face—it means recognizing the resilience and strength you carry through them.

Celebrating You

The festive season is also a time to embrace yourself fully—quirks, flaws, and all. Treat yourself with the same kindness you'd extend to a loved one. Light a candle, cook your favorite meal, or indulge in a holiday movie marathon. Create traditions that make you feel good, whether they align with societal norms or not. Consider this your season of self-discovery and empowerment. You don't need a crowded room or a grand celebration to feel connected. By nurturing the relationship with yourself, you create a foundation of love that sustains you far

beyond the holidays.

Leftover Turkey and Vegetable Pie Recipe

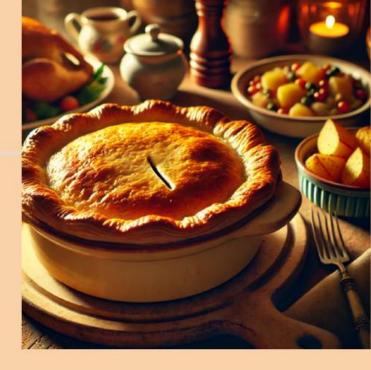
By Deanna

<u>Ingredients:</u>

- · 2 cups cooked turkey, chopped
- 2 cups cooked vegetables (e.g., carrots, peas, green beans)
- 1 can condensed chicken soup (do not dilute)
- 1 sheet frozen puff pastry, defrosted

1 egg, beaten (for egg wash)





Instructions

1. Prepare the Filling:

Preheat your oven to 200°C (400°F). In a skillet, melt butter over medium heat until sizzling.

Add the cooked vegetables and sauté for a few minutes until slightly softened.

2. Assemble the Pie:

Transfer the sautéed vegetables and cooked turkey into a pie or casserole dish.

Mix in the condensed chicken soup evenly.

3. Top with Pastry:

Roll out the puff pastry and place it over the pie dish, trimming any excess.

Brush the top with beaten egg and cut a small slit in the centre to allow steam to escape.

4.Bake:

Place the dish in the preheated oven and bake according to the puff pastry package instructions, or until the pastry is golden and puffed.

Serving Suggestion:

Pair with roasted or mashed potatoes for a hearty, comforting meal.

Enjoy your festive creation!



Ingredients:

- Salt (to rim glasses)
- 1 lime, halved
- 2 cups (500ml) fresh sparkling apple juice
- 1 cup (250ml) tequila (optional, see tip for mocktail)
- 2 tsp finely grated lime rind
- 2 tbsp lime juice
- 4 cups ice cubes
- 4 slices green apple (for garnish)

By Deanna

<u>Sparkling Apple Lime</u> <u>Cocktail Recipe</u>

Instructions:

1 .Prepare the Glasses:
Rub a lime half around the rim of each glass.
Dip the rims in salt to coat.

2. Mix the Drink:

In a cocktail shaker, combine sparkling apple juice, tequila (if using), lime rind, lime juice, and ice cubes.

Shake well until chilled.

3.Serve:

Strain the mixture into the prepared glasses over ice cubes.

Garnish with a slice of green apple and a twist of lime peel.

Mocktail Option:

Omit the tequila for a non-alcoholic version that is equally refreshing.

Enjoy this sparkling delight!





WHAT'S ON - DECEMBER 2024

We've listed just a few events and activities advertised for December – all are free unless otherwise indicated.

Check local council, community centre, or libraries websites to see what else is going on. For example Hackney Libraries have lots going on this winter https://news.hackney.gov.uk/get-into-the-holiday-spirit-with-hackneys-festive-programme.

Don't forget, too, that many museums have exhibitions and events going on especially for the festive season and school holidays. Many, such as the Museum of London Docklands or the Higgins in Bedford, are not only free to enter all year round but just around the corner for many of us.

EAST LONDON HIGHLIGHTS

Hackney Christmas Lights Switch-On | Sun 1 December, 4:30 – 5pm | Hackney Town
Hall Square

Yokimono Japanese Christmas Market | Fri 6 – Sun 8 December, 11am | The Factory, Dalston, E8 2DA | Explore the traditional and contemporary 'Little Japan' in Hackney Santa's Grotto at St Augustine's Tower, Hackney | Saturdays 7 & 14 December, 11am-4.30pm (closed 1-2pm) | The Narrow Way, Mare Street, E8 1HT Winter Market 2024 @ The Ecology Pavilion | Sun 8 December, 12:00–5.30pm | The

Ecology Pavilion, Mile End Park, off Grove Road, E3 5RP
Festive Activities at Hackney Museum | 20 December – 4 January | Hackney Museum, 1
Reading Lane, E8 1GQ | Free family activities including crafts, history exhibits, and a

reindeer trail



BEDFORD, DUNSTABLE & LUTON HIGHLIGHTS

By Karen

Christmas at Hat Gardens | Sat 7 December, 2 – 6pm | Bute Street, Hat Gardens, LU1 2EP |
Live music, free face-painting, giant gingerbread men for selfies and a giant glowing LED
penguin

ë Bedford Christmas Flea Market | Sun 8 December, 10 - 3.30pm | St Paul's Square, Bedford

Christmas Market at Shuttleworth House | Sat 7 and Sun 8 December, 10am - 6pm | Shuttleworth House, Old Warden, Beds SG18 9EA

Christmas Market at Luton Hoo Estate | Sun 8 December, 10am – 4pm | Luton Hoo Estate, LU1 4LF | Free (parking £2)

Twilight Market 2024 Dunstable | Fri 13 – Sat 14 December, 3 – 8pm, and Sun 15th December, 10 am – 3pm | Ashton Square, LU6 3HA

ë Christmas at Market Hill |Sat 14 December, 2 – 5pm | Market Hill, George Street, Luton Love Bedford – Have Fun! |Sat 14 and Sun 15 December, 10.30am – 3.30pm | Family fun in the Howard Centre, the Arcade, and the Harpur Centre

Glenn Miller Memorial Weekend | Sat 14 December, 10am – 5pm | Harpur Square,
Bedford | Live swing music, WWII exhibits, and free lindy-hop classes
Saturday Tea Dance at the Glenn Miller Weekend | Sat 14 December, 2 – 4pm | Harper
Suite, Bedford | Free (book places via Eventbrite)

Festive Sounds at Market Hill | Sat 21 December, at 2 and 3pm, | Market Hill, George Street, Luton

OUT IN THE FRESH AIR

Itchycoo Community Gardening | Every Sunday in December, 2.30 – 4.30 pm | Itchycoo Ecology Pond and Park, Beckton Corridor E6 | Equipment provided, all welcome! https://www.wellnewham.org.uk/events/itchycoo-community-gardening

Nature Rising at Eden Dock | 9am – 5pm daily 'til Spring 2025 | An installation of largerthan-life figures that appear to be emerging from the greenery and water | Eden Royal Dock, Canary Wharf | https://canarywharf.com/whats-on/nature-rising

Bedford Winter Walk | Sunday 21st December, starts at 1pm sharp | A women only, five-mile (easy) hike starting at the Half Moon Faces Statue in Bedford (73 High Street, MK40 1NT) | ages 11+ | Info and register at www.hawaa.org/winterwalk



Winter Gardening Tips: Thriving Through December and January By Craig

Winter can be a challenging time for gardening enthusiasts. As December and January usher in frosty mornings and shorter daylight hours, many plants enter dormancy, and outdoor gardens may appear bleak. However, this season offers plenty of opportunities to maintain, prepare, and even nurture your green spaces—indoors and out. Whether you're caring for houseplants or ensuring your outdoor garden is ready for spring, these tips will help your plants flourish in the heart of winter.

Outdoor Gardening in Winter

Prepare Your Soil for Spring

December and January are ideal months to improve your garden's soil quality. Spread a layer of organic mulch, such as straw or shredded leaves, over flower beds and vegetable plots to protect the soil from frost and erosion.

Prune Strategically

Winter dormancy is an ideal time to prune deciduous trees and shrubs, such as fruit trees, to remove dead or diseased branches and promote spring growth but avoid pruning spring-flowering shrubs like lilacs to preserve their buds for warmer months.

Protect Your Plants

Tender perennials and young plants need extra winter care, using frost blankets or cloches for protection from extreme cold, and relocating potted outdoor plants to sheltered spots like a garage or covered patio to avoid freezing temperatures.

Feed the Birds Winter is a time of scarcity for wildlife, and birds are essential allies in controlling garden pests.

Set up feeders with seeds or suet to attract them to your garden. In return, they'll be ready to help you

manage insects when spring arrives.

Indoor Plant Care During Winter







Winter Gardening Tips:
Thriving Through
December and January
By Craig

Houseplants often struggle during the colder months due to reduced light, fluctuating temperatures, and dry indoor air. Here's how to keep your indoor greenery thriving:

Adjust Watering Habits Most houseplants need less water during winter as their growth slows. Overwatering is a common issue that can lead to root rot. Check the soil moisture by sticking your finger about an inch deep; only water if it feels dry. Always empty excess water from saucers to prevent soggy roots.

Mind the Humidity Indoor heating can make the air uncomfortably dry for plants. Increase humidity by grouping

plants together, using a pebble tray with water, or investing in a humidifier. Misting is another option but be cautious, plants like African violets dislike water on their leaves.

<u>Maximize Light</u> To ensure plants receive enough light for photosynthesis during shorter, weaker daylight hours, place them near clean windows with bright, indirect light, or use grow lights if natural light is insufficient.

<u>Dust and Inspect</u> To maintain healthy photosynthesis, gently clean dust from leaves with a damp cloth every few weeks, inspect for pests like spider mites or aphids that thrive indoors, and promptly treat infestations with neem oil or insecticidal soap.

<u>Don't Overfeed</u> Hold off on fertilising most houseplants until late winter or early spring, as they're not actively growing during these months. The exception is flowering plants, like poinsettias or holiday cacti, which may benefit from a diluted fertiliser during their bloom.

Winter Gardening Activities

<u>Plan for Spring:</u> Use the quiet months to sketch out your spring garden, order seeds, and review gardening catalogues.

<u>Force Bulbs Indoors:</u> Brighten up your home by forcing bulbs like tulips, hyacinths, amaryllis, and paperwhites. They'll bring a cheerful splash of colour to the grey winter days.

Repot if Necessary: If houseplants are root-bound, winter can be a suitable time to repot them. Use fresh potting soil and a container slightly larger than the current one in use.

And Finally...

Gardening in December and January is a time for care and preparation, offering a slower, intentional approach to nurturing indoor and outdoor plants so they remain healthy, vibrant, and ready to thrive when spring arrives.

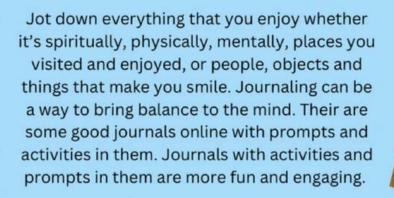
So, grab your gloves, adjust your watering can, and let the beauty of winter inspire your gardening journey

SOLO DAY AT HOME

Tip - Donate, throw unwanted things out, recycle 🛟 Tidy space = Tidy Mind



Grab a good Lunch or Breakfast or dinner and have a takeaway treat or better yet challenge yourself to cook your favourite breakfast. Vincent, Beans & Bites, Chaiiwala, the breakfast club are some brunches to try?







Bring nature indoors, a new plant, a fresh scent, or sit by the window and practice mindfulness, bring in something to the home that feels nurturing or uplifting to you. Having a inspirational quote stuck on your wall, a plant you nurture at home or a favourite clock on the wall can make a difference to your mood and home ?

SOLO DAY AT HOME

By Rajna

Socialising or leaving the home can be hard for some of us whether it's due to lack of friends, disability, health troubles, social anxiety or because it's cold and winter season is amongst us, so we want to curl up. Here are some ways a solo day can become a solo productive day for you!



 Clear out your space & make some money to help with the cost of living by selling your unwanted items on EBay, Vinted or Depop for example alternatively donate them:)



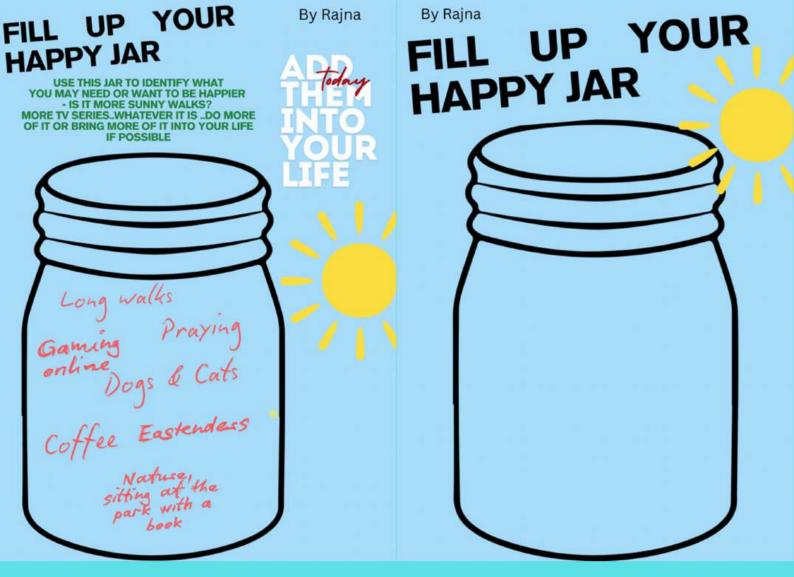


PERFECT GIFT TO YOU OR SOMEONE ELSE

 The charity Mind now create Pause boxes that are delivered to your door - you can subscribe to receive them monthly or buy a one of box as a gift to you or someone else, perfect for this season. The box contains a fun activity to create and do (different each time)

IF health struggles makes it difficult to find something you can create / do, work around your health (crosswords, suduko, a online game, explore options - because life can be limited but doesn't have to be stopped. Diamond painting or origami can be fun ways to spend time at home, explore the right options for you, take a moment to pause & create.

MIND's charity new pause boxes have different activities to keep you excited and allows you to learn a new skill. A bonus is.. the money earned from each box goes towards helping someone and those struggling with Mental health. - Theirs something for everyone



EXTRA WAYS 10 SPEND TIME AT HOME THIS COSY SEASON

By Rajna



DIY's are always fun, theirs
loads of ideas online
have a search for a DIY project
of interest, make your own fake
snow, your own light up mini
tree, theirs loads to choose have a explore.

Diy science kits are a additional fun thing to do and suitable for those who have minimal movement (due to health or disability) - theirs Crystal growing, water marbling,



Audiobook's and Art mash up listen to your favourite podcast, or book and draw something as you listen (this requires minimal movement and can be relaxing)

Learn a new languagle or skill, duo lingo is a fun app that allows you to learn a new language with minimal movement and from the comfort of your home - Staying home alone - doesn't have to be boring this winter





In December 2024, several religious festivals and observances from various faiths will take place globally.

1. Hanukkah (Judaism)

Dates: Sunset on December 25, 2024, to sunset on January 2, 2025

Description: Hanukkah, also known as the Festival of Lights, is an eight-day Jewish celebration commemorating the re-dedication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem. It's marked by lighting the menorah, playing games, and enjoying foods like latkes (potato pancakes, or fritters) and sufganiyot, delicious jelly-filled doughnuts.

2. Bodhi Day (Buddhism)

Date: December 8, 2024

Description: Bodhi Day celebrates the enlightenment of Siddhartha Gautama, who became the Buddha. It is observed by many Buddhists through meditation, chanting, and reflection, and some also decorate a Bodhi tree with lights and symbolic ornaments.

3. Advent (Christianity)

Dates: December 1, 2024 (First Sunday of Advent) to December 24, 2024

Description: Advent is the season of preparation for Christmas in the Christian calendar, marked by prayer, reflection, and anticipation of the birth of Jesus. Many observe Advent by lighting candles each Sunday and using Advent calendars to count down the days.

4. Feast of the Immaculate Conception (Catholic Christianity)

Date: December 8, 2024

Description: This feast celebrates the belief in the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, meaning she was conceived free from original sin. It is a holy day in the Catholic Church and is observed with Mass and prayers.

5. Kwanzaa (Pan-African, cultural with spiritual elements)

Dates: December 26, 2024, to January 1, 2025

Description: Kwanzaa is a celebration of African American culture, unity, and heritage, though it is not strictly a religious holiday. Each day of Kwanzaa focuses on one of seven principles (Nguzo Saba) such as unity and self-determination, and families light a kinara (candleholder) in observance.



6. Zarathosht Diso (Zoroastrianism)

Date: December 26, 2024

Description: This day commemorates the death of the prophet Zoroaster (Zarathustra). Observed by Zoroastrians, it is a solemn day of remembrance that involves prayers and reflections on Zoroaster's teachings.

7. Dhanu Sankranti (Hinduism)

Date: December 15, 2024

Description: Dhanu Sankranti marks the sun's transit into the Sagittarius (Dhanu) zodiac sign. It is especially celebrated in Odisha, India, with offerings to the gods, special prayers, and sometimes fairs.

8. Sharaf (Bahá'í Faith)

Date: Begins at sunset on December 31, 2024

Description: This is the first day of the Bahá'í month of Sharaf, which means "Honor." The Bahá'í calendar is divided into 19 months of 19 days, and each month starts with a gathering for prayer and community fellowship.

9. Yule (Paganism)

Date: December 21, 2024 (Winter Solstice)

Description: Yule, celebrated on 21st December, is one of the eight Sabbats in the Pagan and Wiccan wheel of the year. It marks the rebirth of the sun and is celebrated with feasts, decorations of greenery, and lighting candles or Yule logs as symbols of hope and renewal.

10. Saint Nicholas Day (Christianity)

Date: December 6, 2024

Description: Celebrated in parts of Europe, especially by children, this day honours Saint Nicholas, the patron saint of children and gift-giving, who was born in southern Turkey near the modern day city of Antalya. It often involves giving small gifts or treats in shoes or stockings.

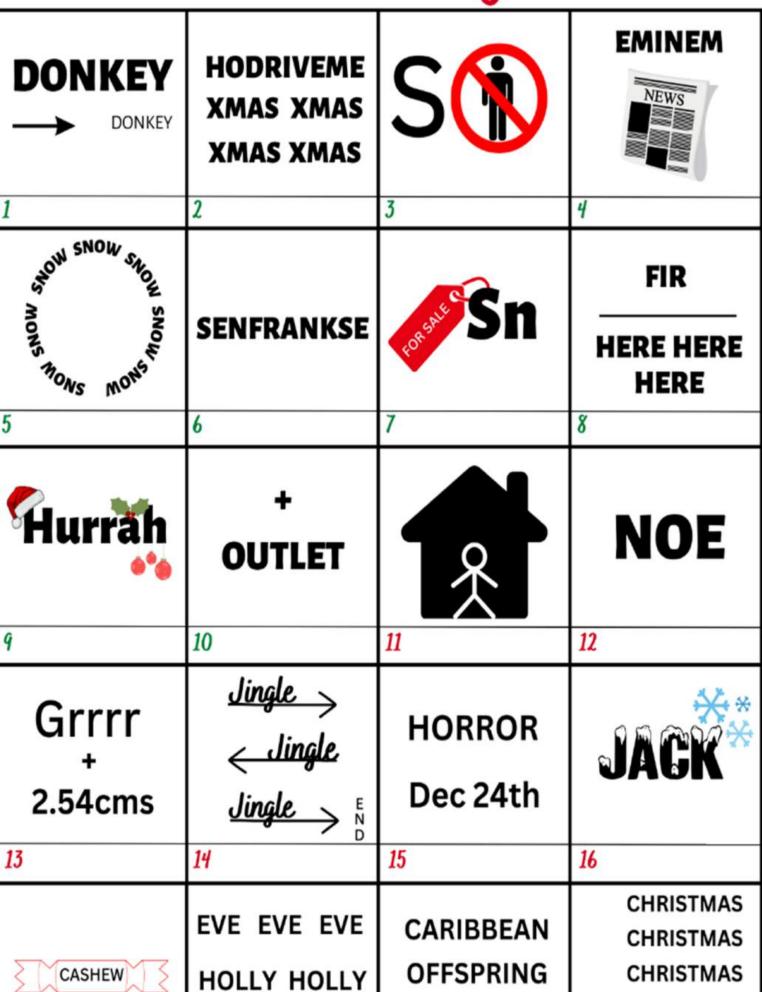
These festivals and observances reflect the diversity of faiths and cultural traditions celebrated around the world during December. Each one brings a unique set of practices, from introspection and prayer to joyful gatherings, games, feasts and gift-giving.



By Fiona



Christmas Dingbats



HEY HI HELLO

→ CAROL

CHRISTMAS

 \rightarrow CHRISTMAS

Very Hard

4			5			6	
	1	5					
		3			2		
		6					
	8		1	3			
		1			5		
6				5			
				6	7		
		8	9	1			

Medium Sudoku

			8	3	6	9	1	4
		9			4		7	
4		1			5	2	3	
	4							9
	2					6		
			6					7
			5			7		
	7		2	6		5		
			4		1		9	

Its begging to look a lot like Christmas

Unscramble these words to solve the puzzle!

1. LDYUTIEE
2. SILASAW
3. TEAOPITINS
4. PHIEAYPN
5. ETAMNUANNB
6. EITLMSETO
7. VEDNAT
8. NIVYATIT
9. CARAINNONTI
10. RYHRM
11. ENKISFNRAECN
12. EHMHELBET
13. LOEN
14. ETAGPDRIR
15. RNIDEERE
16. STOSEICL
17. OLAGNRCI
18. VIITSFTEY
19. DNGRALA
20. YHOLL

Solutions Page

Vary Hard Sudoku

Medium Sudoku

4	2	7	5	8	1	9	6	3	7	5	2	8	3	6	9	1	4
8	1	5	6	9	3	2	7	4	6	3	9	1	2	4	8	7	5
9	6	3	7	4	2	5	8	1	4	8	1	7	9	5	2	3	6
5	4	6	8	2	9	3	1	7	8	4	6	3	5	7	1	2	9
7	8	2	1	3	6	4	5	9	1	2	7	9	4	8	6	5	3
3	9	1	4	7	5	6	2	8	5	9	3	6	1	2	4	8	7
6	7	4	3	5	8	1	9	2	9	1	4	5	8	3	7	6	2
1	3	9	2	6	7	8	4	5	3	7	8	2	6	9	5	4	1
2	5	8	9	1	4	7	3	6	2	6	5	4	7	1	3	9	8



It's begging to look a lot like Christmas

- Yuletide
- Wassail
- Poinsettia
- Epiphany
- Tannenbaum
- Mistletoe
- Advent
- 8. Nativity
- 9. Incarnation
- 10. Myrrh
- Frankincense
- 12. Bethlehem
- 13. Noel
- 14. Partridge
- 15. Reindeer
- 16. Solstice
- 17. Caroling
- 18. Festivity
- 19. Garland
- 20. Holly



USEFUL CONTACTS

NHS SUPPORT

NHS WWW.NHS.UK
ELFT WWW.ELFT.NHS.UK
Befriending Service ELFT.BEFRIENDINGSERVICE@NHS.NET
People Participation ELFT.PEOPLEPARTICIPATION@NHS.NET

MENTAL HEATH CRISIS LINES

 Newham
 0207 771 5888

 Tower Hamlets
 0207 771 5807

 Hackney
 0208 432 8020

 Luton
 01582 556971

 Bedford and Mid-Bedfordshire
 01234 315691

SUPPORT FOR ADDICTION

Talk To Frank WWW.TALKTOFRANK.COM
Alcoholics Anonymous WWW.ALCOHOLICS-ANONYMOUS.ORG.UK
Cocaine Anonymous COCAINEANONYMOUS.ORG.UK
GamCare WWW.GAMCARE.ORG.UK

SUPPORT FOR BEREAVEMENT

Cruse WWW.CRUSE.ORG.UK
Bereavement Partnership NATIONALBEREAVEMENTPARTNERSHIP.ORG
The Good Grief Trust WWW.THEGOODGRIEFTRUST.ORG
At A Loss WWW.ATALOSS.ORG

SUPPORT FOR CARERS

Carers UK WWW.CARERSUK.ORG
Family Action WWW.FAMILY-ACTION.ORG.UK

SUPPORT FOR DOMESTIC ABUSE

Domestic Violence Helpline 0808 2000 247

For men experiencing domestic abuse 0808 801 0327

Refuge WWW.REFUGE.ORG.UK



USEFUL CONTACTS

SUPPORT FOR FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES

WWW.GOV.UK/OPTIONS-FOR-PAYING-OFF-YOUR-DEBTS The UK Government

WWW.STEPCHANGE.ORG Step Change Citizens Advice WWW.CITIZENSADVICE.ORG.UK

National Debtline WWW.NATIONALDEBTLINE.ORG

SUPPORT FOR HOUSING PROBLEMS

Crisis

Your local council WWW.GOV.UK/FIND-LOCAL-COUNCIL WWW.CITIZENSADVICE.ORG.UK

Citizens Advice

WWW.CRISIS.ORG.UK/GET-HELP

Shelter ENGLAND.SHELTER.ORG.UK

WWW.HOMELESS.ORG.UK StreetLink

SUPPORT FOR LONG TERM CONDITIONS

The Patients Association WWW.PATIENTS-ASSOCIATION.ORG.UK WWW.AGEUK.ORG.UK Age UK

EXTRA SUPPORT FOR MENTAL HEALTH

Hub of Hope HUBOFHOPE.CO.UK WWW.MIND.ORG.UK MIND **TELEPHONE: 116 123** Samaritans Young Minds YOUNGMINDS.ORG.UK LGBT+ Helpline SWITCHBOARD.LGBT

SUPPORT FOR SEXUAL VIOLENCE

The Survivors Trust WWW.THESURVIVORSTRUST.ORG WWW.RASASC.ORG.UK Rape Crisis WWW.SURVIVORSUK.ORG Survivors UK

EXTRA SUPPORT FOR SUICIDALTHOUGHTS

WWW.PAPYRUS-UK.ORG Papyrus

WWW.RIPPLESUICIDEPREVENTION.COM R;pple Suicide Prevention

Shout GIVEUSASHOUT.ORG

Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide UKSOBS.ORG

Campaign Against Living Miserably WWW.THECALMZONE.NET