



MENTAL HEALTH Bulletin

13th December 2021

Hello everyone,

I hope you are all well and keeping safe regarding the latest Covid variant. This is a busy time for everyone and most of us are looking forward to the Christmas festivities. In the academy we are enjoying the last couple of weeks of term. Staff have been entertained this week to a small production of The Grinch performed by the students who attend the after-school drama club. Well done to all the students who took part.

Next week our students are going to the cinema as year groups, as their end of year treat and reward for their attendance and hard work this term. It will be a great opportunity for them to enjoy some downtime from lessons and be able to enjoy spending time with their friends and tutors. Definitely what we all need for our well-being after a very long term.

Keeping Safe over Christmas

Although most of us have fun and enjoy Christmas, this is not the case for everyone. Adults and children may find it a difficult time. Loneliness, grief, domestic abuse, and family arguments do not stop at Christmas time and in some instances may become more difficult. I want to use this newsletter to make some suggestions as to how to try and make this time a little better and to provide links to sources of support over the Christmas period.

Family Time

Christmas can be a stressful time for families. There might be arguments at home, or you might have to spend time with people you don't like. Arguments can sometimes happen because people drink too much alcohol. If you're worried about your family drinking at Christmas, then there is support out there. For adults, Drink Aware have 12 tips of how to stay safe and healthy over Christmas. <https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/news/twelve-tips-to-stay-safe-this-christmas>

Not every family spends Christmas together. If parents are divorced or separated children might spend time with one parent but not the other. Children having a say in plans over Christmas should be encouraged and where possible seeing both parents over the holiday period can be good for them and adults alike.

Don't try to compare your Christmas to the Christmas you see on TV or social media. Everyone's Christmas is different, and people choose to celebrate it in different ways. And of course, some people don't celebrate Christmas due to religious or personal reasons. Don't put undue pressure on yourselves to try to live up to the unrealistic expectations of what the 'perfect' Christmas should be. Try to enjoy the time spent with family and friends and spend time apart doing things that interest you. Even a walk around the park is good for your mental health and well-being.

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MENTAL HEALTH Bulletin

Feeling Lonely and Isolated

Adults and children can feel lonely at Christmas. Some people live alone or have no family, particularly the elderly. Parents who are divorced or separated may not be able to spend time with their children. Children in care may feel isolated and miss their family. Think back to last year when we were all under covid restrictions and were not allowed to mix with family members from other households.

If you are going to be alone this Christmas spend the day however you want and do not feel pressured to conform to the routines and expectations of society. My daughter and I had pie and chips for Christmas dinner one year rather than spending hours preparing a traditional Christmas dinner. We had a lovely, relaxed time and thoroughly enjoyed the day making it our own version of Christmas. Try to plan your day how you want to spend it; for example, a bath and pamper day, binge watching a box set or films, relaxing with a good book and box of chocolates. When you think about it, Christmas is just another day on the calendar.

If you have neighbours or friends who live alone try to find a few minutes just to check that they are ok and spread some festive cheer. And never forget the power of the Zoom for an online chat with someone who may be spending Christmas alone.

Mourning at Christmas

Christmas can be a sad time for some people who have lost someone. Christmas is a time for making memories and for thinking back over the year that is coming to an end. This may be the first Christmas that you are spending without a loved one or sadly someone you know may be ill or pass away over the Christmas period. You may worry about feeling down or upset and may think that you need to pretend that you are enjoying the festivities. Think about what is best for you and talk it through with family or friends beforehand. Give yourself time to remember the person you lost, you could talk about what you remember, write them a letter, or look at photos. Don't put pressure on yourself to behave a certain way, it's okay to be sad and to show if you're feeling upset. If necessary, take some time out away from the family to gather your thoughts and think about the person you miss. Try to make new memories of Christmas, doing something you enjoy doesn't mean you'll forget the person you lost, but it can help make things easier.

Mental Health

Mental health difficulties can increase over the festive period. Depression and anxiety may become more difficult to manage due to expectations and putting undue pressure on ourselves. Family arguments, self-harm, alcohol issues and domestic violence all increase over Christmas. If you feel at risk, your mental health deteriorates, or the safety or mental health of others is a concern seek help. Organisations are available to support 24hours a day even over Christmas. Services are available for adults and children. The links are at the end of this bulletin.

Useful tips <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/christmas-and-mental-health/christmas-and-mental-health/>



MENTAL HEALTH Bulletin

Not celebrating Christmas

Not everyone celebrates Christmas. Some people might not like the time of year and others might not because of their religion or beliefs. It's always okay to not celebrate a holiday. It might seem like everyone celebrates Christmas when every advert on TV is about Christmas, and the shops are full of decorations and gifts. But even if you or your family doesn't celebrate Christmas, you can still enjoy this time of year. It's a holiday and that means you have some time to relax, enjoy yourself and see friends and family.

Useful links:

Childline: 0800 1111 <https://www.childline.org.uk/>

Samaritans: 116 123 <https://www.samaritans.org/> email jo@samaritans.org (response time 24hr)

Mind: non-urgent help 0300 123 3393 <https://www.mind.org.uk/>

YoungMinds support for parents and children (non-urgent) <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/>

Women's Aid (non-urgent) <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/>

I hope you have found the information in this bulletin useful. And as always, if you need any further information please do not hesitate to get in touch with the Academy.

And whatever way you decide to celebrate Christmas or spend the holidays, I hope you have an enjoyable, peaceful and restful time.

Wishing you a happy Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year

Tracey Corbett-Lees
Mental Health Lead

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