



Mental Health Support with MYB

Hints & Tips on Surviving Christmas

*Issue Fourteen – December
2020*

Love it or hate it, the Christmas holiday period can present itself with many challenges!

www.esrasurrey.co.uk info@mindingyourbusiness.org.uk

Minding Your Business is a part of the mental health support charity, ESRA Limited (DBS/122020)





Mental Health Support with MYB

Hints & Tips on Surviving Christmas

Minding Your Business (MYB) offers Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England training and bespoke mental health and wellness courses, presented both online and in-person by accredited instructors. All profits from MYB go to **ESRA Limited**, a mental health charity (number 281004) which focuses on getting people back into work, or remaining in work, after suffering from mental ill health.

These are challenging times with many of us working remotely, maybe feeling isolated or dealing with unusual circumstances and ill health. One thing is for sure, no one should ever worry about asking for help.

MYB Newsletter number 14! In the October 2020 Issue 13, we discussed men's mental health, highlighting men's depression, stress and men's eating disorders. We felt that we really couldn't discuss these topics without even touching on suicide and we were going to highlight this in this edition, but with the festive season approaching and our 'tier's now decided, most of us are thinking of Christmas and the more immediate challenges it presents! Our suicide newsletter will be sent out in January, but do look at the final page 16 for a very helpful link to gaining knowledge to support someone who maybe considering taking their own life.

*To everyone – please take extra care of your mental and physical health. Be kind, enjoy every moment and **we wish you a very Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy, productive and enjoyable New Year!***

If you need any sign-posting to support, please don't hesitate to contact us.

HELPLINES



The Samaritans

116 123

jo@samaritans.org

Text "Shout" to

85258

Crisis support, 24hrs

CALM

0800 58 58 58

(daily 5pm to midnight)

More helpline
details on
Pages 11 & 12

Contents

Minding Your Business (MYB)	1
Surviving Christmas	3
Tips & Ideas for Surviving Christmas.....	4
Christmas with MYB & friends	9-10
Helplines and Support at Christmas & New Year	11-12
Funny Christmas Poem	13
A Poem about Friendship	14
Next MYB Newsletter – Suicide Awareness.....	15
Christmas Opening Hours	15
Contact Us	15



Surviving Christmas



The Christmas period is usually filled with so much excitement! Brightly lit decorations in the streets, excited children visiting Father Christmas, crowds of people hustling and bustling down the high streets choosing what gifts to buy, a sea of scarfs, hats and gloves huddled around brightly lit Christmas trees, skaters dancing (or colliding) on the outdoor rinks...

Hey wait! Crowds? Skating? Busy high streets?!

Maybe busy, just not the 'usual' busy but it will happen again! 2020 has certainly thrown us a lot of very serious challenges with the Covid-19 pandemic. You know what they are! But what we need to do now is focus on how we can make the most of this time...and how to survive Christmas!

Many of us will have been holding our breaths over the last few weeks; waiting to hear if we would be able to visit family and friends during the festive season, then waiting to see if we would only be able to shop online or actually visit the shops for our Christmas delights. Now we are informed of both, and like it or not, to help save lives and prevent the NHS from being totally overloaded, we need to follow the rules and guidelines, and consider the health not only of ourselves, but of others as well.

We also need to think about the people who have lost their jobs or have had their paid work hours cut so may not be able to afford to have their 'usual' Christmas, and remember those who have lost loved ones or are experiencing uncertain times. It may not be you, but someone you know.

Are you ready for this break from work? Are you excited and looking forward to it? Or are you dreading Christmas? Are the concerns of catching Covid-19 out-weighing the feelings of excitement you would usually feel at this time of year? Or will this be a lonely time for you?

Let's have a look at how we can get through this!



Tips & Ideas for Surviving Christmas

Twenty Tips



1. **Plan your plan**

Work to a time plan or set up a To Do list. And don't expect it to be perfect - it may fail at some point! Oh well...

2. **Sort out your Planning**

From making sure that you know where you are going to be and/or who is coming to your house, to buying presents and feeding your guests, ensure that you know what is happening and when, right now! You'll feel a lot less stressed as the days pass if you know what you are doing, what you have to achieve and by when. And use your plans as a guide line and reminder – never mind if the odd thing gets missed off or not done! And pace yourself – don't wait until the last minute to rush to get everything done.



3. **Choose the music and have it ready**

If you are expecting guests or just want to lift your spirits, have the music ready well in advance. If you like gentle classical piano music softly setting the ambience or exciting sing-a-long Christmas 'pop' tunes (or both), set up your playlist or grab your CDs, so it's all done and ready. One less thing to worry about!

4. **Communicate about the food!**

If you have a reason not to eat what everyone else usually does, let your host know well in advance. Don't be shy. If you are hosting, ask all your guests well in advance if you need to be aware of any



dietary requirements – then make sure you fully understand what they are. And do ask them to help you or provide something towards the meal if the list is extensive or you are worried. Take it from someone who has a whole host of intolerances, we appreciate being asked and would prefer to provide a full meal ourselves than spend the whole day worrying about what we're eating or in the lead up to the meal, worrying if we will actually get fed!

5. **Do something for someone else**

This can come in many forms. Bake a cake for your neighbour. Donate money to a charity. Buy a gift for a child in hospital (like King's Elf Service). Buy a bit extra when doing your supermarket shop and donate it to the homeless (most stores have a basket for donations). If you are on your own this Christmas and know of someone else who is, why not suggest that you form a Christmas bubble and spend it together?

6. **Decorate**

Paint if you like, but I'm talking more tinsel, Christmas trees and baubles. On your own or in a group, it can be very uplifting seeing your tree or home looking beautiful! There's nothing like sparkling lights, glittery tinsel, dangling baubles (put plastic ones on the bottom bough if you have a cat) ... Search *YouTube* for some ideas!



7. **Start shopping now (if you haven't already)**

You could add something to your shopping trolley each week, like nuts, a favourite tipple or a little gift. Get your online shopping ordered – food and gifts – and remember that the more you do now, the easier it will be later. Much less stress. And closer to Christmas when it's time to buy the fresh produce, be first at the supermarket door in the morning when it's quiet.

8. **Gift Amnesties**

Money maybe tight this year, so approach the families and friends that you would usually buy for and suggest a budget. Or say 'kids only'. Or set up a 'Secret Santa' online with a price limit so everyone gets one gift, and no one is left out. Or make something – a carving, a painting, some Christmas decorations, a cake, a decorative jam jar of sweets... Be creative!

9. **Use local businesses**

If it's ordering the turkey from a local farmer/butcher or taking a socially distanced and masked trip to the high street, support the local shops to buy your Christmas presents and food and drink. Every business needs help at the moment – let some of that help be because of you!



10. Buying gifts

Try to control the pennies. Sometimes easier said than done, but at least have a budget in mind and stick to it. And consider who you are buying for – have they just been made redundant or lost their job, or working in an industry which has really struggled through the lockdowns? They may be really put out if you are too extravagant... And ask people what they would like! It's a great way to control the budget and not fall into the 'useless gift' trap!



11. Buy batteries

If you are giving presents that need batteries, make sure you present the batteries too! And have some extra at home 'just in case' – especially if there are children involved in your Christmas!

12. Pick your arguments – or just don't have them at all!

Take a deep breath and think about what you are going to say next! Does it really matter if three people bought boxes of Christmas crackers or that something is spilt on the kitchen floor? That Auntie is repeating 'that' story again or your sibling is going over, again, something you did years ago? Remember that repercussions from arguing at Christmas can last a lot longer, so if you know that what you could say may be controversial, think, does it really need to be said? Right now?

13. Avoid being bored

You may be about to embark on a crazy, happy and mad Christmas, or the total opposite, but having something ready in case you spot boredom creeping in - and something to suit all ages - might just get you through some awkward moments. How about musical crackers (bells or whistles are great fun)? Board games ready? 52 cards in the pack? A suitable film pre-recorded...



14. Have an escape plan or location

A little bit of quiet time can be good for everyone, so have a plan in mind! Maybe it's somewhere you can escape for just 10 minutes if everyone is driving you nuts? The dog could do with (another) walk! But do remember to go back – and don't be away for longer than others would expect you to – communicate, and all will be well!

15. Delegate / Offer Support

Why should all the strain be yours or your hosts? If hosting, think what other people can do to help, like provide a starter or desert, or purchase the crackers, or be the drinks-host or 'snack topper-upperer', so it's one less thing to worry about! And if you are visiting someone at Christmas, ask in advance what you can bring and suggest items, like "let me bring a couple of bottles of wine" or "can I bring the cheeses?" You get the idea!



16. Watch your health

And that is your mental health **AND** your physical health. If work is extra busy in the run up to Christmas and New Year, you may be someone who, when they actually stop, gets a cold or starts to feel run down. If that's you, start something now. Exercise – even if it's a short walk, do it daily when it is light (Vit D!), do take time to relax or set a few hours of no-



device time. Have you taken multi-vitamins before? Speak to a pharmacist or your GP. How about setting 10 minutes aside to listen to your favourite tunes or starting some painting, reading, drawing or other craft? Something that you enjoy. Your mental health will benefit from it!



17. Keep traditions and Make memories

Your household numbers may be less, but that is no reason not to keep up with traditions. If you can't or don't want to go to your place of worship, then find a service online. If you always open a present on Christmas Eve, what's stopping you now? Think about what is important to you, and do it! And why not make new memories? You may have spent most of the year in the house with the same person you will spend Christmas with, so why not think of little things you can start to do this year? How about planning a Christmas film fest with drinks and popcorn or a trip to the beach with your Santa hats on and a flask of something warming – or sing carols around a fire pit in the garden – or make and decorate your own Christmas sweets or biscuits?





18. Don't try to be perfect and don't sweat the small stuff!

Why set yourself up to fail? Some of the best memories are those moments that weren't meant to happen! Don't sweat the small stuff. If people have to wait an extra hour or so for dinner, so be it! If someone forgot to bring the desert – make something up with what's in the cupboard – it doesn't have to be 'special'!



19. Do something for the planet



Buy wrapping paper that can be recycled. And check your council's website, because you may not need to remove the sticky tape! Re-gift or donate unwanted gifts. Give experiences rather than items, like a driving experience, wild food foraging with a chef, paddle boarding for two or wine tasting and bee keeping – the list is endless!

20. Stay safe and Keep in Touch

From 23rd to 27th December, up to three households will be able to form a 'Christmas Bubble'. Many are excited at the prospect of seeing their loved ones this Christmas, but just as many, are scared of what the outcome could be, especially if they have a medically extremely vulnerable person, elderly or other high-risk person in their group with regards to the catching or passing on Covid-19. There is a great number of suggestions on how to keep safe from this potentially nasty virus, so please take heed, and stay safe.

Many of us had never even heard of Zoom or Teams at the beginning of the year, but most people know how to use these apps! Set up a virtual family get-together so whilst you may not be able to be together, you can still be involved in each other's lives and enjoy the day together!



Christmas with MYB & friends



At MYB we often ask our friends and colleagues if they have anything to add to our newsletters, and we're really pleased to say that they had quite a lot to say about Christmas time! Not only did they offer their own tips on how to survive the seasonal period but also how they will be spending the time:

- Don't worry about what time Christmas lunch will be served. It's just us this time!
- Prep as much food the day before as possible, and wash all the cutlery and crockery in advance so it's all sparkling and clean if it's been sat in the cupboard for a year.
- Help those who can't help themselves. We'll be visiting my elderly mum and dad over the next few Saturdays and will put up their decorations early in December, then we are spending Christmas day with them so that they can enjoy the Christmas cheer – and we will cook them their Christmas Dinner.



- Do whatever you want if you want to spend the whole day in your pyjamas then do it – especially if circumstances mean you are spending the day at home without any visitors.
- Keep it simple. Meet with one other household and plan meals – order early. Lots of walks and remembering to give yourself some space and time.
- Enjoy what you have and don't stress over what you can't control. There are many ways to keep in touch with family and friends even if you can't meet up with them, so make the most of what you have and have fun!
- Keep dinner as simple as possible. If you don't like something, don't make it – and there's nothing wrong in using frozen roasters and veg.
- I decided not to travel from Scotland to Hertfordshire this year as I have health issues and it's a long drive. I also won't be able to visit my sister who has special needs. But what that means is that I will have a stress-free Christmas on my own. There will be no pressure to have dinner at a set time. Just a day of relaxing and doing what I want, when I want – or should I say, when my dog wants!
- This year it's easy food – no pretense of Santa – and no long car journey north. BUT, BUT it has been a tough decision not to go to Scotland to see my parents and we've had to cancel our hotel and Christmas dinner which we booked nearly a year ago. My special parents haven't seen my son since February but we have to remember that their health comes first. So, we have decided NOT to stress getting to supermarkets to buy a turkey and all the trimmings – and the whole family, who are spread all round the world, have already discussed what Christmas Dinner 2020 will be. From sweet & sour chicken & French toast & spaghetti hoops in St Albans, to sushi in Panama City, to square sliced sausage sandwich in Afghanistan! And we're going to wear pjs all day, eat 'naughty' food and be happy. Everything will be lovely and simple, with games, films and quality time together!





- My family won't be travelling to Northumberland to see Granny this year as originally planned.



The tree is already up and decorated with more lights on order, so the house is extra sparkly! We will facetime Granny throughout Christmas day so it feels like we are together, and the food will be simple – and as stress free as possible so less hours in the kitchen and more time having fun! We will take a Christmas day walk and for window waves with our local friends, and rather than going to our local Church for the magical Christmas service, we'll join everyone online instead.

- Retaining a sense of humour! It is not normal to spend so much time with people that you live with. We're used to visiting others -friends and family- and seeing our work colleagues! Having found myself starting to nag, I put to my family that we needed to start making light of this situation of being together so much, and that we needed to make light of getting on each other's nerves to normalize it with a humorous twist.

- This year, we're making the most of what we have by trying to keep the Christmas spirit and finding alternative ways to celebrate. We're going to ice skate at Hampton Court and have a meal there, and we'll have a movie afternoon with a project, so like a cinema. There will be Christmas cooking, Christmas pudding, Christmas cake and mince pies – and some special treats too! In our town, there is an advent trail and we, like many people in the area, have put up the decorations early giving each other a lot to talk about and enjoy!



- Don't EXPECT gratitude or appreciation – but embrace it graciously if it comes!
- Lists...lists and lists of lists!



- Don't tell anyone what is coming – that way if something fails to materialize, no one will know! And remember it's only a BIT Sunday Roast!
- If you have to give times, announce that "All timings are approximate".
- So that all the Christmas dinner is eaten, discourage family from grazing on nibbles and sweets all morning!
- If someone offers help, take it! And nominate a drinks-host, so it's one less thing for you to do or worry about.

- Make clear boundaries with your guests, and balance your sense of social obligations with your need to self-care...



Helplines and Support at Christmas & New Year

If you or someone you know is struggling at Christmas, and their struggle is life threatening, please get them to the **nearest A&E** straight away (if you can) or call **999 IMMEDIATELY**.



THE SAMARITANS

The Samaritans respond to a call for help every seven seconds and they are there to help anyone in need. **Open 24 hours a day, seven days a week**, even at Christmas, if you are struggling or need support, make contact.

Telephone FREE:

116 123

Email (response 24hrs):

jo@samaritans.org

Write a letter FREE POST:

**Chris, Freepost FSRB-KKBY-CYJK,
PO Box 9090, Stirling FK8 2SA**

What will happen when you call:

- A volunteer will answer the phone
- You talk, they will listen and talk through your concerns, worries and troubles
- They will give you space to be yourself
- They won't tell you what you should do – their opinions are not important for the call

CRISIS SUPPORT

If you are struggling to cope and need to talk, trained Shout Volunteers are there to help you, day and night. The text line is free, confidential, an anonymous text support service, and you can text from anywhere in the UK.

Text:

SHOUT to 85258

Website:

www.giveusashout.org

Shout can help with issues including: depression, anxiety, abuse, panic attacks, suicidal thoughts, self-harm, relationship problems and bullying.

CALM ZONE

The Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM) is leading a movement against suicide. The helpline and webchat are open from **5pm to midnight, 365 days a year**, and are for people in the UK who are down or have hit a wall for any reason.

CALM Helpline:

0800 58 58 58

Webchat:

www.thecalmzone.net/help/get-help

MIND Infoline

The charity Mind provides an information and signposting service, open from 9am to 6pm, Monday to Friday, but will NOT be open on bank holidays (closed on 25 December, and will reopen on Tuesday 29th December 2020, then closed on 1st January 2021). You can ask about mental health problems, where to get help near you, treatment options and advocacy services.

Mind Telephone: 0300 123 3393
Text: 86463
Post: Mind Infoline, PO Box 75225, London E15 9FS

REFUGE

Freephone, 24-hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline.

Helpline: 0808 2000 247
Website: www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk

OTHER

Report a crime or non-emergency enquiries call **101**.



Funny Christmas Poem

The Eve Before Christmas

© Linda J. Doucett

'Twas the eve before Christmas.

I left it too late.
The shelves are all bare.
Oh, why did I wait?

I swore I'd shop early,
I clearly remember,
And be done with it all
By the first of December.

But now here I am
With picked-over stock.
The boxes are crumpled
On the Marvel knockoffs.

Sweaters too big,
Slippers too small.
The pushing the grabbing,
Get me out of this mall.

I will stop at the drug store
And purchase a card
And fill it with money.
Why make life hard?

It always fits
And suits everyone's taste.
No need to wrap it.
That's just a waste.

But should you not like it,
Dear, have no fear,
If you'd like to return it,
My pocket's right here.

A Poem about Friendship

A Friend's Greeting

By Edgar Guest

I'd like to be the sort of friend
that you have been to me;
I'd like to be the help that you've been
always glad to be;
I'd like to mean as much to you
each minute of the day
As you have meant, old friend of mine,
to me along the way.

I'd like to do the big things
and the splendid things for you,
To brush the grey out of your skies
and leave them only blue;
I'd like to say the kindly things
that I so oft have heard,
And feel that I could rouse your soul
the way that mine you've stirred.

I'd like to give back the joy
that you have given me,
Yet that were wishing you a need
I hope will never be;
I'd like to make you feel
as rich as I, who travel on
Undaunted in the darkest hours
with you to lean upon.

I'm wishing at this Christmas time
that I could but repay
A portion of the gladness
that you've strewn along the way;
And could I have one wish this year,
this only would it be:
I'd like to be the sort of friend
that you have been to me.

Source: www.familyfriendpoems.com/poem/a-friends-greeting-by-edgar-guest

Next MYB Newsletter – Suicide Awareness

In January, our newsletter will cover suicide awareness, but we recognise that the Christmas and New Year period can put a huge strain on many people's mental health, sometimes with horrendous results.

ZSA Training (Zero Suicide Alliance) provides a superb FREE 20-minute suicide awareness training course online which will give a better understanding of the signs to look out for and the skills required to approach someone who is struggling, whether that be through social isolation or suicidal thoughts. A certificate is provided at the end of the course which can be printed. Very thought provoking and it looks at three case studies explaining clearly and sensibly how different situations can materialise and what can be done to help. Most of my family has taken this course –without prompting by me! Donna.

www.relias.co.uk/hubfs/ZSA-FullTraining-10012020/story_html5.html



Christmas Opening Hours

The ESRA and MYB offices will be closed from 4pm on Tuesday 22 December and reopen on Tuesday 5th January 2021.

There will however be sporadic email cover for MYB clients by Donna/Judy during this close-out time, with the exception of Monday 4th January when the office will be having an electrical upgrade resulting in the servers being down and no online access.

Contact Us

If you have any questions at all at any stage, please do not hesitate to contact us! Please copy both Judy and Donna into all emails – thank you.

Judy Corney
Donna Barrington-Smith

judycorney@mindingyourbusiness.org.uk
donna@esrasurrey.co.uk

Telephone: 01737 772 126

ESRA Limited & MYB, 1-3 Linkfield Corner, Redhill, Surrey RH1 1BL

Registered Company number 1512263.

ESRA Charity number 281004



