MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT TEAM

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How to look after your mental health during the Christmas season

A guide for young people

Introduction to Christmas and mental health

You might be thinking how can ‘the most wonderful time of the year’ affect my mental health? Christmas could affect your mental health in many ways and be difficult for anyone, at any point in their life but especially if you’re struggling for the first time this year or you may have found Christmas difficult in the past, and you’re reminded that you’re dealing with it again this year.

You might enjoy Christmas but not be able to celebrate it the way you'd like. Or perhaps you find some aspects enjoyable while others feel stressful.

Christmas is a hard time for most people so you’re not alone in your feelings.

Christmas can affect your mental health in various ways, including:

- Feeling stressed due to other challenges happening in your life.
- Experiencing loneliness or feeling left out when everyone else seems happy, but you’re not.
- Feeling frustrated that you can’t enjoy Christmas the way others do.
- Putting too much pressure on yourself to meet expectations of what Christmas “should” look like.
- Finding comfort in looking forward to Christmas but struggling with feelings of emptiness once it’s over.
- Feeling apprehensive about the new year and what it might bring.
- Wishing to celebrate with someone who’s struggling, which can be emotionally challenging.

If you have a mental health condition, additional difficulties might include:

- Mental health symptoms interfering with your ability to celebrate as you'd like.
- Lack of access to usual support services if they're closed during the holidays.
- Disruption to your usual routine, such as school or activities being on break.

These challenges can make the festive season feel overwhelming, but it's important to remember that everyone's experience is different, and it's okay to seek support if you need it.

This guide aims to share tips to help you cope during Christmas, find ways to support others and discover useful contacts and resources for finding support at Christmas.

Why Christmas can be tough for young people

This page covers some reasons that Christmas can feel tough for young people and how that affects your mental health:

- **Disrupted routines** can have an impact on your sleep and day-to-day management of symptoms.

- **Travelling** can be stressful and disruptive, especially is you're going to be somewhere unfamiliar.

- **Finding enough time to fit everything in** can feel overwhelming and often we put too much pressure on ourselves to make sure we do everything.

- **Being a young carer** means extra planning around Christmas events and gatherings.

- **Bereavement** whether it's recent or some time has passed always feels harder this time of year.

- **Separation in families** is hard when Christmas is seen as the time of year when families are supposed to come together and have a wonderful and loving time. This message brings with it enormous pressure and expectation.

- **Health problems** can impact the time you spend with loved ones at Christmas, for example if you or someone close to you is unwell.

- **Loneliness** can feel more difficult at Christmas when there are lots of images of families and friends together.

- **Feeling pressure to enjoy yourself** can be challenging when you're not feeling your best.

- **Public spaces** that can feel overwhelming with lots of noise, lights and smells.

- Some **support services** may not be open or may run a reduced service.

- **Worrying about gifts** such as what you buy, who you buy for and how they'll be received.

- **Practical reasons** could mean you’re not able to see people at Christmas because of problems with transport or costs.

- **Not having enough money** to join your friends in group activities such as ice skating or visiting Christmas markets.

As you can see there are lots of reasons why Christmas can be tough for young people. You might be affected by one or more of these reasons but try to remember you’re not alone in your feelings and your feelings are valid no matter what.

We have shared some coping tips to help you if you are affected by any of the reasons mentioned above. You will also find lots of support services that are open during the Christmas holidays to help you by, along with Christmas themed activities, breathing techniques and our s(elf)-care advent calender!

You’ve got this!

Coping tips



Try to include as much of your regular routine in your Christmas plans as you can.



If you’re going to be somewhere unfamiliar, think about what you need to take to help you cope.



Think about if you really need to do everything and consider cutting out the things you don’t want to do.



Plan ahead as much as possible to help relieve stress.



Remind yourself that Christmas won’t last forever.



Take time out to do something to forget it’s Christmas or distract yourself.



Experience your feelings, they’re always valid.



Think about making Christmas plans in advance so you have things to look forward to.



Be kind to yourself, take the pressure off and focus on your wellbeing.



If something is too much for you, set boundaries and say no without feeling guilt.



Make a note of the support services that are open over Christmas so you are prepared if you need to ask for help.



Be open with family or friends to agree ways to make Christmas plans free or low cost.



Find other ways to connect such as online by social media or on FaceTime.



Look for free local offers or events.

Getting support over the Christmas holidays

Below we have highlighted some support services that are open during the Christmas holidays.

CAMHS Crisis Line

01482 259400

The CAMHS crisis line is available for children and young people 24 hours a day. This covers young people within Hull and East Riding who may be experiencing emotional distress.

NHS 111

By calling NHS 111, and selecting the mental health option, they can help to get you the urgent support you need for your mental health.

Hull & East Yorkshire Mind

01482 240133

Infoline is open Monday to Friday, 10am to 6pm. It will be closed on 25th and 26th December 2024, and 1st January 2025.

Childline

0800 11 11

www.childline.org.uk

Childline is open 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. They also offer an online 1-2-1 counsellor chat service.

Samaritans

116 123

Samaritans is open 24 hours a day and 7 days a week.

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S(ELF)-CARE ADVENT CALENDAR

1 Make a homemade gift for someone special

2 Go on a winter walk with family

3 Make a gratitude jar

4 Listen to a Christmas guided meditation

5 Go ice skating with your friends

6 Make time for a catch up with someone special

7 Write down three things you're proud of this year

8 Watch your favourite Christmas movie

9 Make a gingerbread house

10 Donate old clothes to a local charity

11 Do something nice for yourself

12 Practice Christmas star breathing

13 Decorate your room with Christmas lights

14 Go to a Christmas market

15 Play a Christmas themed game with your family

16 Organise secret Santa with your friendship group

17 Bake Christmas cookies

18 Have a Christmas themed photoshoot with your friends

19 Snuggle up with a hot chocolate

20 Read a classic Christmas story before bed

21 Make a Christmas decoration

22 If you are able, donate food to your local food bank

23 Have a duvet day

24 Take time to talk through or write down your worries

25 Merry Christmas

Enjoy your day with family or friends!

follow @mymhst for more self-help tips to boost your emotional wellbeing and support your mental health

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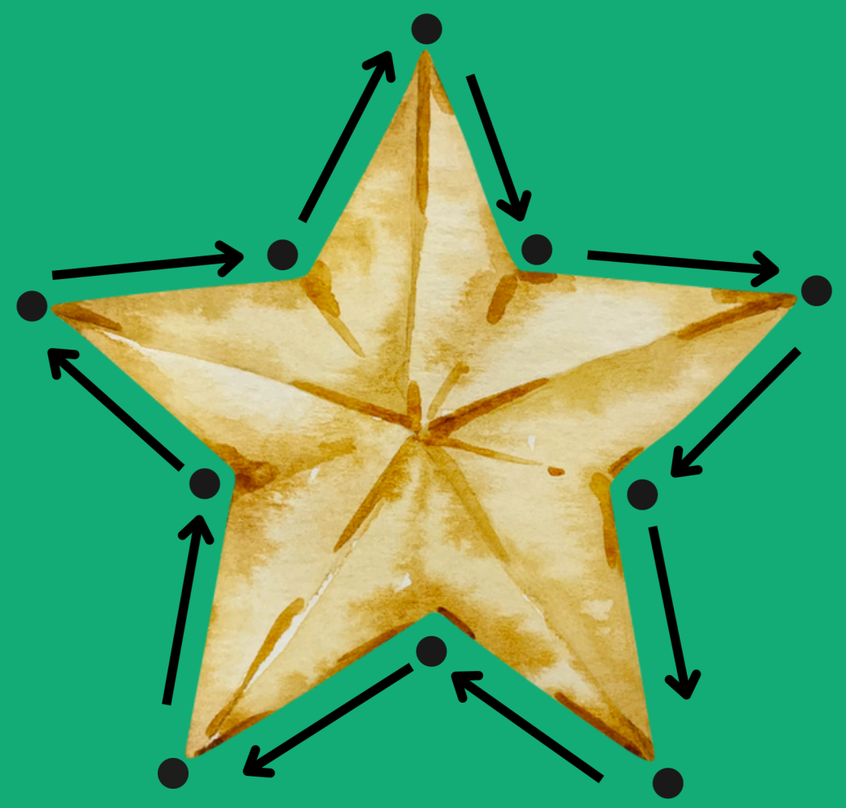
CHRISTMAS BREATHING TECHNIQUES



Star breaths



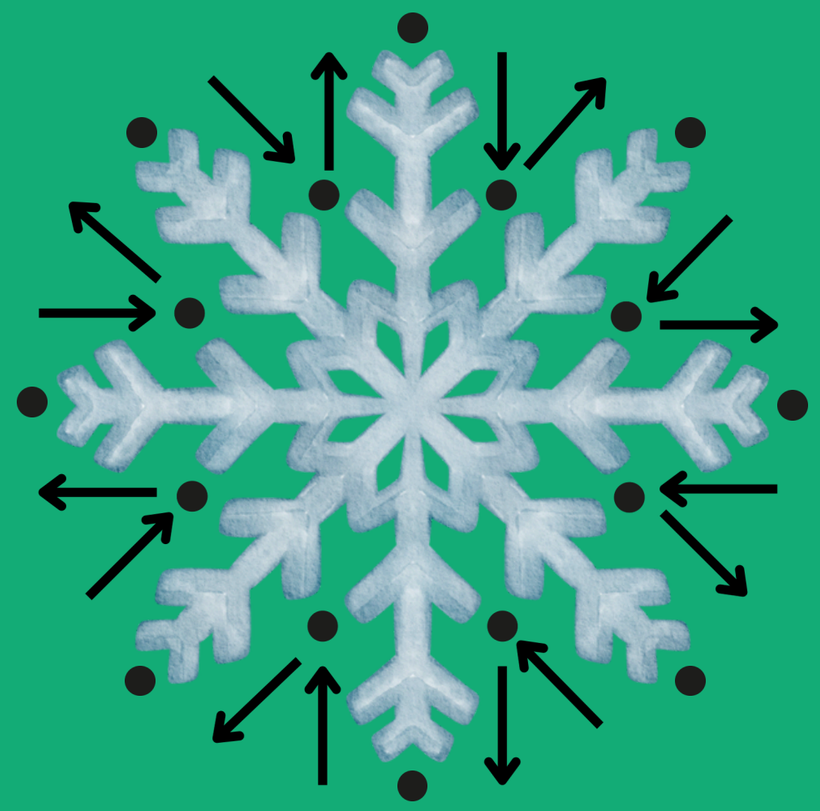
Christmas tree breaths



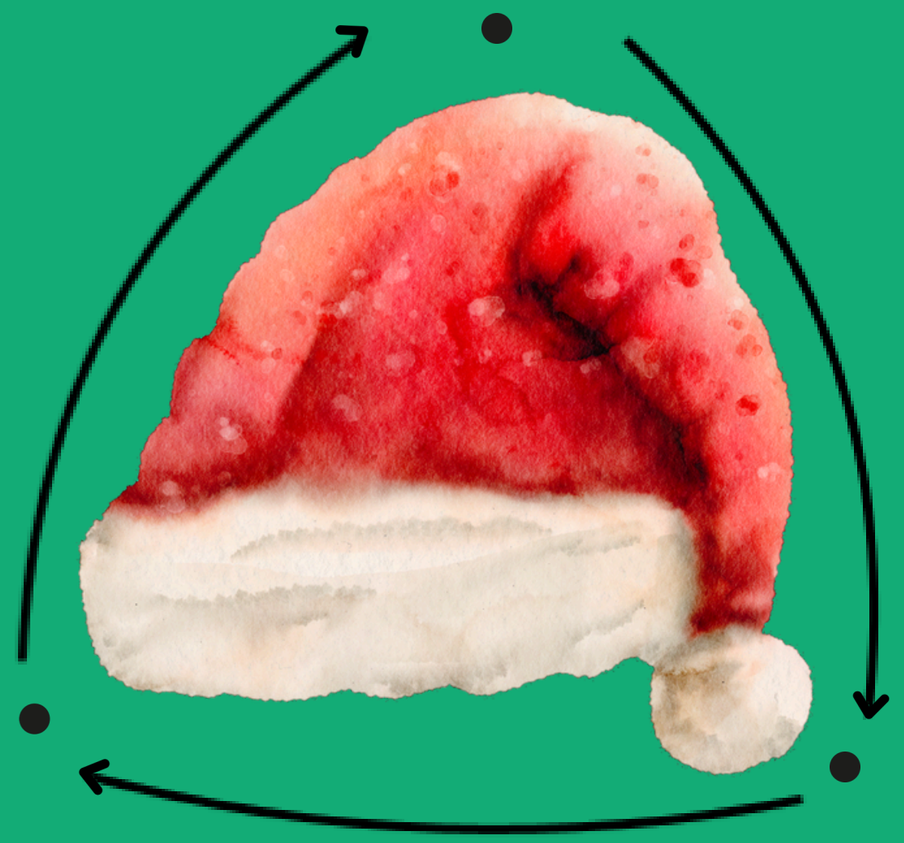
Cookie stack breaths



Christmas gift breaths



Snowflake breaths



Santa hat breaths

follow @mymhst for more self-help tips to boost your emotional wellbeing and support your mental health

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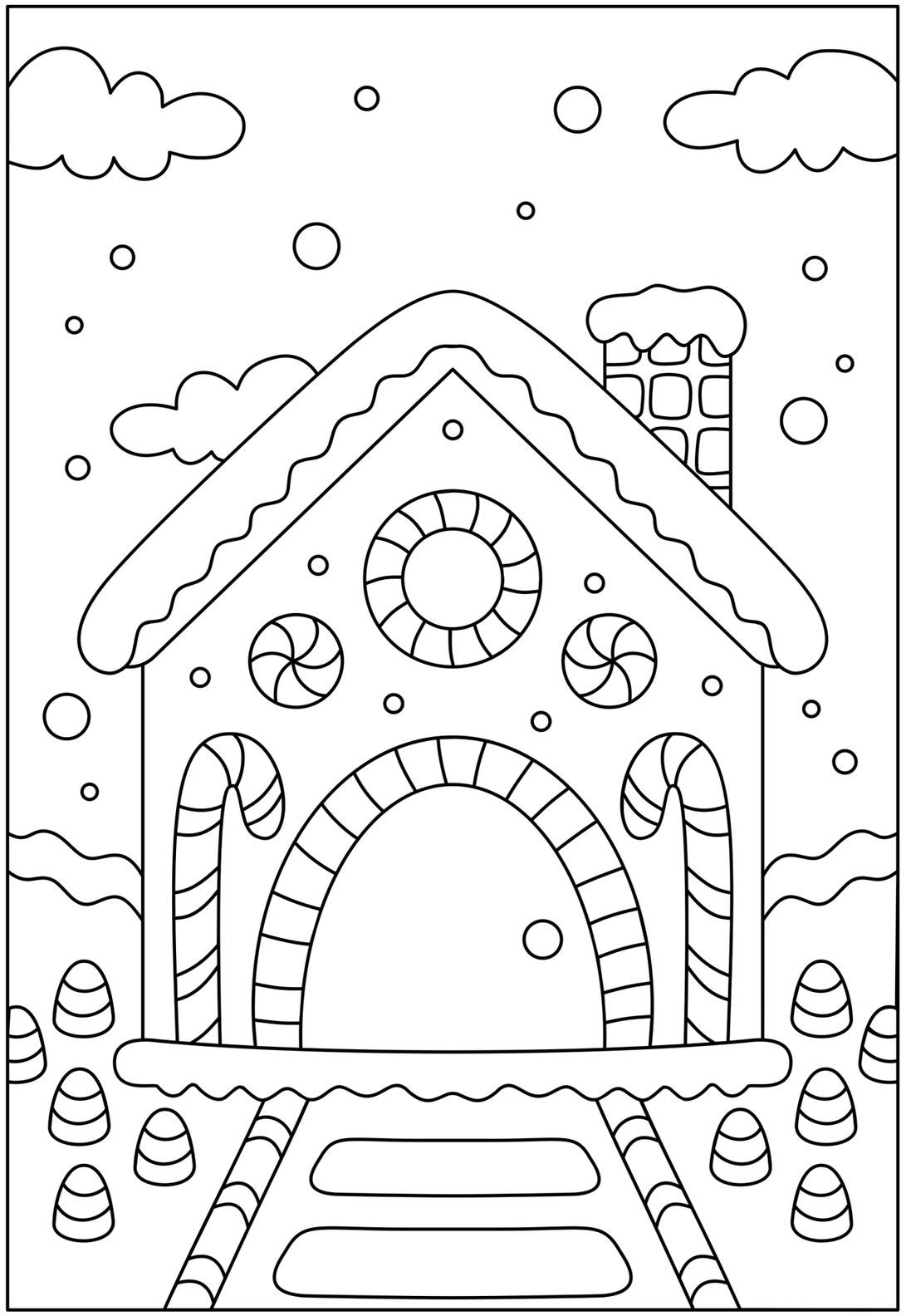
CHRISTMAS MINDFULNESS COLOURING ACTIVITY







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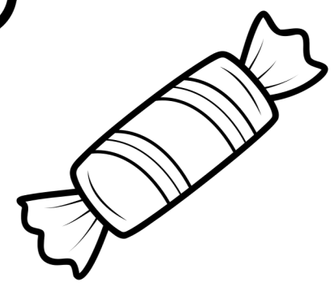
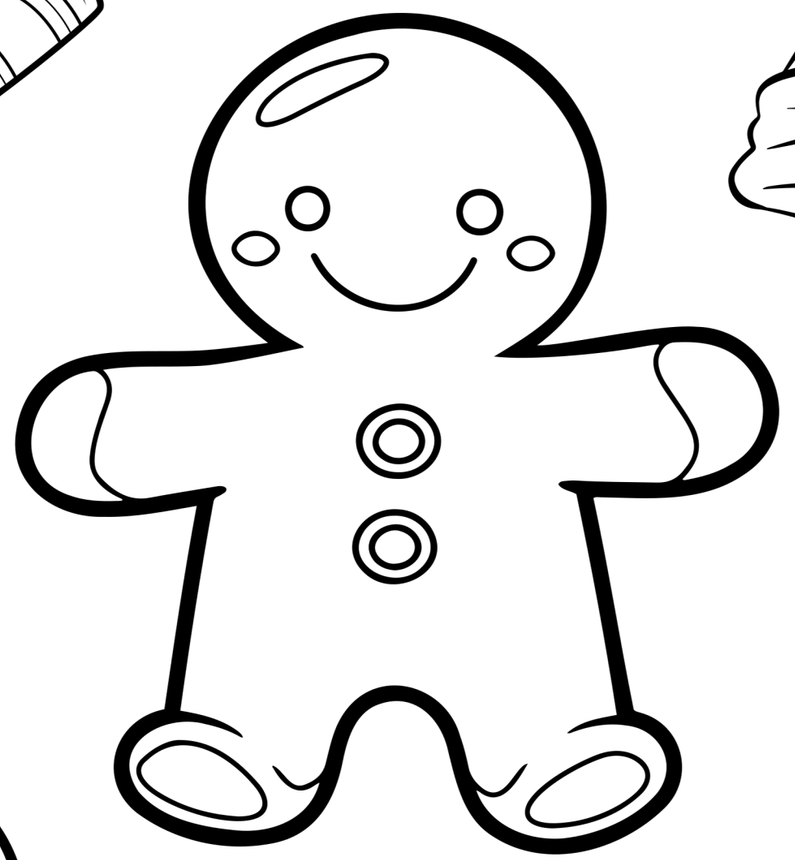









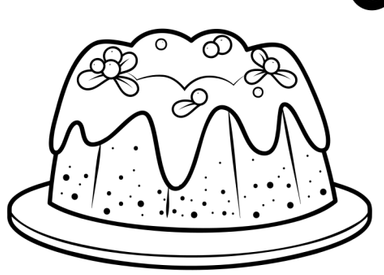


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Follow us

Follow us on social media to get access to more resources, self-help tips and support service information.

@mymhst

From all of us at the Humber Mental Health Support Teams, we wish you and your family a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Support services

Local Support

Hull & East Yorkshire Mind
01482 240200
heymind.org.uk

Hull Thrive
howareyoufeeling.org.uk

Young Healthy Minds
eastridinghealthandwellbeing.co.uk

National Support

Childline
0800 1111
childline.org.uk

Samaritans
116 123

Young Minds
youngminds.org.uk

Anna Freud
annafreud.org

