

HELLO...

AND WELCOME TO THE DECEMBER HEALTHIER MIND NEWSLETTER.

It's that time of year again when we are all universally shocked at just how dark it gets so early on in the day. With the increased darkness and cooler temperatures creeping in, many of us may feel our wellbeing is being affected. Not only this, but for many of us, stress levels may be rising and financial concerns mounting with the festive season being just around the corner.

In this edition, we will be talking all about how you can **look after your mental health during the festive season**, including information about 'winter depression'. We also cover **National Grief Awareness Week** and delve into **the real cost of financial hardship**, providing our tips to support your financial health this month. As well as all of this, we will be sharing with you our **new Mental Health First Aiders** and more!

Read on for more...

Harjeet Moore

Employee Experience Director

UPDATE

Please note that we are in the process of updating our Wellness Commitment. As part of this, the frequency and format of our newsletters will be changing. We look forward to launching the new style newsletter in Spring 2023!

WHO ARE OUR NEW MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AIDERS THIS MONTH AND WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO THEM?

MEET OUR MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AIDERS



Sarah Tott

RESOURCING PARTNER

Becoming a mental health first aider is important to me for multiple reasons, mainly because I want our colleagues to know they are supported and have somewhere to turn if they need it and I want to be part of change in the reduction of stigma.



Jennie Moseley

CATERING MANAGER

DMS WHITTINGTON

Because the difference one conversation can make is huge.

I have seen how poor mental health can affect family members and colleagues and its not always obvious. I care about people, and learning to pick up on signs, lend an ear or even offer advice really appeals to me not only as a person but as a manager responsible for my team and beyond.

NATIONAL GRIEF AWARENESS WEEK

2nd – 8th November

National Grief Awareness Week is a campaign run by The Good Grief Trust to help raise awareness of the impact of grief and to create a unified voice for bereavement support services.

The festive season can be an especially painful time for those of us that are grieving. Whether we have lost a loved in December or anytime of the year, the focus on coming together with the people we love can be an aching reminder of those we have lost. For some, it can feel as though getting through the festive season is unbearable due to the memories which come flooding back.

When it comes to grief, it is so important to make sure that we are looking out for our loved ones, friends and colleagues when they are struggling. Here are some key reminders about the grieving process from The Good Grief Trust.

JUST BECAUSE I'M SMILING DOESN'T MEAN I'M NOT GRIEVING

The bereaved often have to hide their grief from others. Sometimes it is from their friends and family as they do not want to burden them. Sometimes it is from their colleagues at work. Please look out for them, check they are okay, in the early days and ongoing. They may look alright, they may be going to work, but deep inside they could be struggling and just need your support and understanding.

SAY THEIR NAME, I'M THINKING ABOUT THEM ANYWAY

We are often afraid to mention the person's name who has died. We think we will upset our friend or family member, but it is generally the opposite. By saying their name, remembering them and talking about them, you are helping to share your love and affection for that person. This is very important and will help those grieving to know that you will help to keep their memory alive.

THERE'S NO SET TIME FOR GRIEVING

There is a myth that you 'get over' grief. That you 'move on'. You don't. You move forward with your grief, but you may be affected by a bereavement throughout your whole life. Often after the funeral, people leave and things go 'back to normal'. This is the time when the bereaved most need support, when they feel alone and isolated. We need to understand that there are triggers that may come from nowhere that will affect them in the weeks, months and years after the death.

THERE'S NO ONE FACE OF GRIEF

Grief does not discriminate. We will all be affected by a bereavement. Children, young people, the older generation, all faiths, all religions, all cultures, all sectors of our community will grieve. We need to help all minority groups who are often stigmatised to #OpenUpToGrief and help to support anyone, anywhere who needs help.

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND SUPPORT, HEAD TO OUR SIGNPOSTING SECTION.



LOOKING AFTER YOUR MENTAL HEALTH DURING THE FESTIVE SEASON

This the season...to be kind to your mind.

Christmas and New Year are known to be wonderful but also difficult times. You might enjoy some parts of the festive season but maybe some parts fill you with dread. For some of us, it might be difficult to understand why some people don't look forward to the festive season. Here are just some of the reasons why someone might struggle with this time of year:

HERE ARE SOME OF THE REASONS WHY CHRISTMAS CAN FEEL DIFFICULT:

- **It reminds us of those who aren't around** - whether a loved one has passed away, or relatives no longer keep in contact, Christmas can bring these feelings to the forefront.
- **Being in uncomfortable situations** - seeing people in your life who don't accept you for who you are, feeling judged, reminders of past trauma and dealing with conflict.
- **Social pressures** - feeling out of place if you don't celebrate Christmas, pressures to enjoy yourself, decorate, buy the perfect gifts. Pressure to eat and drink things you don't want to or can't eat.
- **Loneliness** - feeling aware that we don't have lots of friends and family around us, being in hospital or a care home for Christmas, feeling as though we are missing out.
- **Money and time** - worries about extra costs, childcare challenges, finding time to prepare everything, the stress of the logistics and organisation of Christmas.



HERE ARE SOME IDEAS OF HOW YOU CAN LOOK AFTER YOUR MENTAL HEALTH THIS DECEMBER:

- **Keep some structure or routine** – it can be easy to lose touch with our usual routine with the busyness of December and the dark mornings creeping in. Think about what makes you feel your best and try to keep some sense of normality to support your wellbeing.
- **Plan something nice to do after the festive period** – the post-Christmas blues can hit us hard, having something to look forward to at the start of next year could make a real difference.
- **Make a list, check it twice** – create calendar reminders or a list of your festive plans to make sure that you balance your social commitments with your self-care.
- **Set boundaries** – the festive season can feel overwhelming. It's important that you look after your mental health by prioritising things that are most important to you and saying no, or only committing to a certain timeframe.
- **Avoid unhealthy comparisons** – It is easy to get carried away with what everyone else is doing (or buying!) during the festive season. Avoid unhealthy comparisons by taking time off of social media.

SPENDING CHRISTMAS ALONE

If you are spending Christmas alone this year, it's a good idea to make a list of the things you can do that will support your mental health during December. Here are some ideas to consider:

- **Get outside if you can** – go for a walk once a day, give others a smile and wish them merry Christmas or happy holidays!
- **Consider limiting your Christmas exposure** – do festive movies and songs make you feel warm and fuzzy inside or do they sometimes leave you feeling down?
- **Connect with others** – find out about social get togethers or clubs at local community centres to keep your spirits high.
- **Treat yourself** – if you can, treat yourself to your favourite foods and activities, without having to consider what everyone else wants!
- **Plan time to connect** – if you can't be with others physically, can you book in some time to have phone or video calls with loved ones in advance?
- **Plan something to look forward to each day** – this could be watching your favourite movie, or treating yourself to a festive coffee at your local café.



MENTAL HEALTH UK'S (MHUK) CHRISTMAS ADVENT CALENDAR

Each day during the run up to Christmas MHUK are bringing you wellbeing tips, festive activities and easy ways to fundraise. Click **HERE** to open today's door.

MENTAL HEALTH UK'S GLAD TIDINGS FESTIVE APPEAL

Every year Mental Health UK support thousands of people across the UK who find themselves overwhelmed by their mental health and money problems. Click **HERE** if you would like to donate.

SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER

Many of us are affected by the changing seasons. Colder weather and darker evenings can affect our mood, sleep, energy levels and more. It can sometimes feel as though we have lost half of the day when the darkness begins to creep in. The change in weather and the increasing evenings can mean that we are less likely to spend time outdoors, be active and get out of the house.

It's normal to be affected in some way or another by the changing seasons, especially at first, as each year it always seems to feel like quite a shock to the system. However, if the seasonal changes are having a significant negative effect on you which is impacting your daily life and wellbeing, there is a chance you might suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).

WHAT IS SAD?

SAD is a form of seasonal depression, sometimes known as 'winter depression'. SAD can affect you at any time of year, although it has been found to be more common and more severe in winter. The exact causes of SAD are unclear, but it is often linked to the reduced amount of sunlight in the winter as low light levels can disrupt our body clocks, affecting our sleep, appetite, and mood.

People who have experienced another form of depression are more likely to develop SAD. It's also thought that there may be a genetic link as some cases appear to run in families.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

- Having a lack of energy, feeling tired and lethargic
- No interest in things which you enjoyed previously
- Feelings of despair, helplessness or having suicidal thoughts
- Sleeping for longer than usual and finding it hard to get up in the morning
- Changes in appetite and reduced sex drive
- Finding it hard to stay connected with friends and family
- Difficulty concentrating



TIPS TO HELP YOU FEEL BETTER

You should make an appointment to see your GP if you think you may be experiencing SAD and are struggling to cope. Here are some ideas to help support you if you are struggling...

LIFESTYLE CHANGES

Making changes to ensure you can get as much natural light as possible, including spending time outside in the daylight. Can you go for a quick lunch time walk? Can you wake up at a different time to make the most of the light?

LIGHT THERAPY

If it's hard for you to spend time in natural sunlight, you could try out using a special lamp, known as a light box, to simulate exposure to sunlight.

WINTER PROOF YOUR SURROUNDINGS

Think about what makes you feel better when you're indoors. Candles? Warm, cosy lighting? Decorating your space to feel more seasonal? Planning comforting yummy meals to look forward to?

FOOD AND MOOD

In the colder months, many of us find ourselves wanting stodgey comfort foods. There's nothing wrong with enjoying these but it's important to make sure that we are still getting a balanced diet which helps to support our physical and mental health. Checkout **The EatWell Guide** to make sure you're getting what you need.

VITAMIN D

It is not clear whether vitamin D supplementation can help to relieve SAD symptoms, but low levels of vitamin D are commonly found in people with SAD. The government recommends that everyone should consider taking a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms of vitamin D during the autumn and winter months. For more information head to the [NHS website](#).

TALKING THERAPY

Counselling or cognitive behavioural therapy is known to be an effective treatment for depression.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, HEAD TO OUR SIGNPOSTING SECTION.



THE REAL COST OF FINANCIAL HARDSHIP



Our financial and mental health are closely connected, if we are experiencing difficulties in one of these areas, it's likely that we will also start to struggle in the other area too.

The cost-of-living crisis, not to mention the coronavirus pandemic, have increased many people's financial and mental pressures, so it is more important than ever to look after your mental and financial health as we head into 2023. Christmas and New Year can be a costly time of year, often leaving us with a financial hangover as we head into January, which many people struggle to recover from. Having a plan in place can help us to better manage our mental health and our financial circumstances.

HERE ARE SOME USEFUL TIPS TO HELP YOU COME UP WITH YOUR PLAN FOR 2023.

- **Work out your budget for 2023** - setting a budget is a good idea at any time of year, but especially as we head into a new year. Take a look at [MHUK's free budget planner](#) and [budget guidelines](#).
- **Mental Health UK's free Mental Health and Money Toolkit** - to help you understand, manage and improve your mental and financial health. The toolkit helps you to understand the relationship between money and mental health, as well as learning self-help techniques to support your wellbeing.

- **Work out your monthly expenses** - make a list of everything you spend money on and categorise them into priorities: high (important items which need to be paid for first), medium (important items but only to be paid for after high priority items) and low (nice to have items) to make it easier to prioritise.
- **Take a breathing space if you need it** - if your mental health condition has deteriorated and you are struggling to cope with your debt, you can apply for a breathing space. Breathing space is a free government-backed scheme that allows people time to get debt advice and relieve the stress caused by debt. You can learn more about [Breathing Space and how to apply for it here](#).
- **Don't be ashamed to ask for help** - If you are worried about your financial health, you should always ask for support if you need it. So many of us have struggled financially at some point in our lives, often we just don't realise as it is so rarely talked about. Head to our signposting section for a number of helpful links and helplines, including how to [access financial support for our employees](#).

WARM BANKS

Due to the cost of living crisis, many local community centres, library's and churches are offering a warm place to come together throughout the winter months. If you are struggling financially, or would simply like the chance to connect with others, try to find out what's available in your area.



SIGNPOSTING INFORMATION

MENTAL HEALTH

[Samaritans](#) Whatever you're going through, a Samaritan will face it with you. Call 116 123 free of charge, available 24/7.

For peer support, you can access [Cliv](#) – a free online community here to support everyone with their mental health.

For more information and useful contacts relating to Christmas and mental health, click [here](#).

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) – Head to the [NHS website](#) to find out more about symptoms and treatments relating to SAD.

Make the most of the [Employee Assistance Programme](#) which includes counselling and referral services to deal with personal problems, including housing, bereavement and financial concerns.

BEREAVEMENT

[Cruse Bereavement Support](#), call the helpline: 0808 808 1677 or chat to an online grief counsellor.

For useful information, helplines, advice and encouraging stories for those who have lost someone, head to the Good Grief Trust [HERE](#).

Head to the Loss Foundation for bereavement support following the loss of a loved one to cancer or covid-19, click [HERE](#).

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Check out our [Employee Support booklet](#) which is full of help and support for your financial and mental health.

Find out more about the recently launched Compass Salary Finance scheme [HERE](#), including salary advance and loan support.

For money advice, including budgeting and mental health support, visit the [Mental Health & Money Advice](#) website.

For support options and helplines, checkout the [helpful contacts](#) list.

Find out more about the Breathing Space scheme [here](#).

For general financial tips and advice, checkout the [Money Saving Expert](#).

OTHER

Support for current and former military personnel, contact the Royal British Legion Helpline:

080 8802 8080



INFORMATION



SUPPORT



MENTAL HEALTH AT WORK COMMITMENT

ESS has signed up to the **Mental Health at Work Commitment** for employers who want to lead the way, drive change and declare publicly that mental health is a priority. The **six standards** making up the commitment are shown below.

Head over to the [HSE Website](#) to find out more.

1

Prioritise mental health in the workplace by developing and delivering a systematic programme of activity

2

Proactively ensure work design and organisational culture drive positive mental health outcomes

3

Promote an open culture around mental health

The six standards

4

Increase organisational confidence and capability

5

Provide mental health tools and support

6

Increase transparency and accountability through internal and external reporting

**MENTAL
HEALTH
AT WORK**



EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

Please click on the image to the right to see a reminder of the **Employee Assistance Programme** we currently have in place.



ASK YOUR MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID SPECIALIST

HEALTHIER MIND

If you're interested in finding out more about Mental Health First Aider training send us an email.

We are qualified in Mental Health First Aid.



HARJEET MOORE
HEAD OF PEOPLE
ESS



EVAN JUDGE
SENIOR HSE MANAGER
DEFENCE AND
GOVERNMENT SERVICES



ALLAN ERRINGTON
HSEQ MANAGER
OFFSHORE

If you have any questions, or ideas on how we can improve how we support our people, please get in touch with any one of us directly.

If you need to seek support in mental health issues, please contact: **harjeet.moore@compass-group.co.uk** or on **07971 096905**

Don't forget your Wellness Team are also here to support you and are all trained in Mental Health First Aid. Ask them any health and wellbeing questions or raise any concerns. You can also book one of their tailored sessions to include mindfulness.

Get in touch with Harjeet by scanning the QR code



MENTAL HEALTH ON THE HSE WEBSITE

Click [HERE](#) to get to the Mental Health section! – make sure you're logged into Compass Connect.

You can find all our Mindful Moment Toolbox Talks and 'how to's' including 'how to sleep better', 'how to manage and reduce stress' and 'how to support mental health at work'.

YOU MATTER

As a reminder, we have some great resources through our YOU matter campaign which can be found on the learning portal. Click [HERE](#) to visit the You Matter Portal or scan the QR code below.



MINDFUL MOMENTS

Have you seen this month's Mindful Moment Toolbox Talk? This month is about mindful eating for mental health. Drop us an email at ess.wellness@compass-group.co.uk if you'd like a copy sent directly to your email inbox each month.

WELLNESS RESOURCES

Our Nutrition and Wellbeing Team create monthly resources to help support your overall health and wellbeing relating to national and international initiatives.

Email ess.wellness@compass-group.co.uk to sign up for their monthly newsletters, find out about their monthly wellness webinars and Q&A surgery's. You can also find them across social media, search WeAreESS on YouTube and Instagram.

CLIC ADULTS MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Clic is a free online community to support adults with their mental health. Clic's online chat room is there to connect people with others on the things that matter to them, wherever they are. Members can access a host of mental health information, tools, tips and resources to help people help themselves, as well as their carers, family and friends.

Clic is there for anyone 24/7 and is moderated so that anyone can find the support they need in a safe environment. Click [HERE](#) to visit Clic

