

Top Tips for good mental wellbeing over Christmas and into 2016.

1. Drink sensibly

Alcohol, being a depressant can make us feel irritable, resulting in low mood and occasionally aggressive behavior. The safe units of alcohol guideline recommended in order to sustain good mental health over Christmas period. See www.drinkaware.co.uk.

2. Be Active

Physical exercise releases those “Feel-good chemicals, endorphins, which help us feel relaxed, happy and boost our mood. Cycling, walking, jogging, or joining in Christmas games, can reduced anxiety, decrease depression and improve self-esteem. Sports activities can develop physical skills and focus our minds. Exercise has also supports our immune system against colds, flues and viruses during winter months. www.mentalhealth.org.uk.

3. Eat Well

Over indulgence is part of Christmas and therefore it is important to think long-term about diet for the following year. Maintaining a balanced diet of fruit, vegetables, carbohydrates, protein and omega 3 (fish oils) sources, will help us work toward weight loss. <http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/healthy-eating/Pages/Healthyeating.aspx>

4. Social contact and activity.

The festive period brings opportunities to increase face to face communication which produces the hormone, oxytocin; this benefits our immune system, heart health and cognitive function. A New Year’s resolution to see our friends and family more often can help to boost our own mental wellbeing, and that of others. <http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/help-information/mental-health-a-z/F/friendship/>

5. Relax

Christmas can produce stress and difficulties sleeping, producing long term effects on your mental health. By exercising more regularly or practicing mindfulness – meditation, yoga, breathing techniques and a less judgemental openness to situations, thoughts and feelings – can alleviate the symptoms of your stress and gain more control when coping with difficult situations. It can also help us act less impulsively. www.bemindful.co.uk.

6. Sleep.

Evidence has highlighted the role of sleep in mental well being. Therefore quality sleep will result in improved mental well being (see tips above). The New Year should include a return to your regular routine, in addition to reducing alcohol. Implementing regular exercise and alleviate your stress, will also promote good sleep. <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/insomnia/pages/introduction.aspx>

Adapted by Reuben Millward (RAMH Education) from The Mental Health Foundation Top Tips for Christmas and the New Year. Dr Andrew McCulloch

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