



Surviving  
Christmas  
and New Year

Supporting our recovery  
and keeping well



# Surviving Christmas and New Year

## Supporting our recovery and keeping well

### Why we wrote this booklet

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Sometimes people find the Christmas and New Year period is really hard.

Everyone else seems to be having a great time but you're feeling worried or find it hard to cope. And it's worse when you have problems with drug or alcohol problems, because you are trying to keep yourself well when other people are drinking and having parties. And all the places where you get support at other times of the year have shut up for the holidays.

Well, you're not alone. Lots of people find the holiday period difficult. So we've put together this handy guide to surviving Christmas and New Year.

## About this booklet

We've also tried to get ideas that help you find the sort of support that will work for you - which can be being with other people or keeping away from some of them.

Some of the detailed information here is for people who live in West Dunbartonshire. We have information on what is happening this year, such as the times local services are open over the 2010-2011 holiday period. But most of it will also be useful for future years.

Lots of the ideas here will be useful for people living anywhere. If you live in another area, we hope you follow our example and get together a list of the services and supports that are available in your area and that you find helpful.

## Tips and hints

- Plan out what you need to do over the next few days, or the next week.
- Use the booklet to talk things over with a few friends or with a group if you go to one. Plan what you can do together to look after yourselves and each other.
- You can also talk things over with a support worker or someone else in an addiction service or peer support group, if you find that helpful.
- Some of the ideas here might be a bit late for this year. But they'll help for next year. So we've left space at the back for you to make notes on what you want to do a few months before next Christmas.

**“Some people have had a lot of bad experiences over Christmas and New Year. It’s not a good time. It brings back memories like bereavements they’ve had. It’s hard to deal with.”**

**“I used to go along with being all Christmassy and was miserable but I thought I had to or people would think I was rude. Now I’ve decided not to care if people think I’m being rude.”**

**“I manage ok with Christmas. It’s New Year that I find harder. But it’s easier to just keep to yourself then.”**

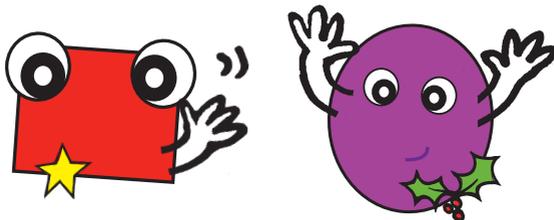
**“I just put all the family hassles aside for the one day. That’s the way I deal with it. I don’t let it upset me. I tell myself it will all be over by tomorrow and then we can all get back to normal.”**

**“Just don’t have a 25th December in your house. Have the 24th twice and go straight on to the 26th. It might help not telling other people you do that in case they think you’re a bit strange. But it works.”**

**"I hate it. I really don't like this time of year. I have to see family that I don't like. I worry about it so much. It makes me miserable. But I'm ok with just a few friends. So I try to see them instead."**

**"Learn something new. Get really engrossed in it. It'll be the middle of July before you notice."**

**"The secret to surviving the holidays? Forward planning."**



## Access to Addiction Services over the holidays

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In Scotland most Addictions Services will close for the 2 public holidays at both Christmas and New Year. Check online, or ring the organization in advance to find out about their Christmas opening hours. This will feel like a long time for some people who use services.

Some of the support services that give care at home will still be giving support - although it might be less than usual because they'll have fewer staff.

Here are our tips on what you can do to feel more confident when the services are closed.

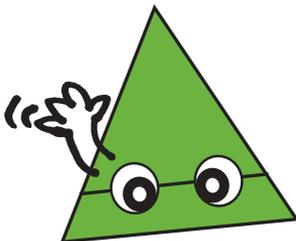
### Tips and hints for before the holidays

- **Talk to your support worker or key worker about what help you might need over the holidays. Come up with a plan for how you will cope and what you can do to keep well.**
- **Get the phone numbers of the out of hours and emergency services that will be available. Put this near your phone, or somewhere you can find it easily.**

## Tips and hints for during the holiday period

- Remember that the services will be open again in a few days.
- Contact the out of hours services if you need to talk to someone.

***“Find what works for you. We’ve put this booklet together to help you work out what that is. We want you to be well and feeling confident about the future.”***



These are other supports that some people find help them a lot.

**Samaritans** is there for people throughout the UK. Their helpline is available 24 hours a day all through the year. They know that this is a difficult period for lots of people.

**The number is 08457 909090.**

**Breathing Space** is the helpline in Scotland for people who want to talk to someone when they need some support for their mental health and wellbeing. It is available all through the year. The times are all through the weekends - 6 pm Friday to 6 am on Monday morning - and then from 6 pm to 2 am during the week.

**The helpline is 0800 838587.**

There is also advice and support through the website: [www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk](http://www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk)

**AA - Alcoholics Anonymous** - is based on peer support for people who want to recover from an alcohol problem.

**The National helpline is 0845 769 7555.**

The website lets you see what meetings are available in your area. Most regular meetings keep on happening all through holiday periods. [www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk](http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk)

**Narcotics Anonymous** is a similar network for people who want to recover from a drug problem. The website is [www.ukna.org](http://www.ukna.org)

**National Helpline is 0300 999 1212.**

**Talk to Frank** has information and advice about drugs. It is there for people who need information about their own drug use and for people who are worried about a friend or relative. Some people find the stories of how people deal with their drug problems are helpful. The website is [www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com)

**The phone number is 0300 123 6600.**

***“I go to the AA Christmas Day meeting and their Christmas dinner each year. It’s a good way to spend the day.”***

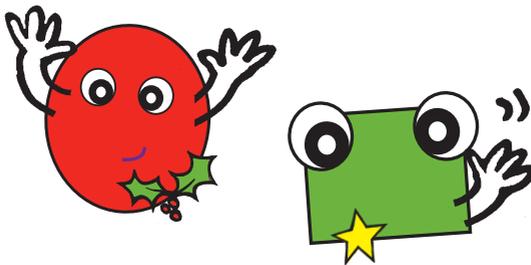
## Ordinary community services

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Lots of people find that the ordinary community services give good support when you are recovering from an addiction. We produced a booklet about these earlier this year called Supporting our Recovery and Enjoying Ourselves.

Going for a walk or a swim, or playing football, or using the libraries are all good ways to keep well. They are especially good over the Christmas and New Year period, when it can be harder to keep active or find things to do.

Many council leisure services and libraries have different opening hours over Christmas and New Year. Check your local council's website for up to date information on opening times and possible closures.



## Tips and hints

- If you like places that feel busy and Christmassy, Go and see the Christmas lights. There will be some in Dumbarton and Clydebank, or go into Glasgow.

Go to the big shopping centres - up at Alexandria or in Glasgow. You don't have to spend money - just look at the lights and the windows.

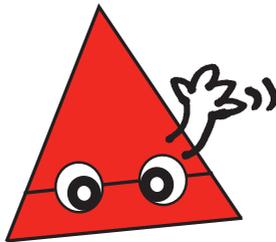
- Enjoy all the free things that the Council are putting on, like the carol concerts.
- Check out the things that are on in places like local churches and community centres.
- Go to the library the week before the holidays. Stock up with books, DVDs, music - things to keep you going.
- If you live in another area, or it's now 2011 or later: check with your local Council on their website or ask at the library what is on in your area.
- If you find there was something you wanted to do but missed it – make a note on your list for next year and look forward to doing it then.

**“When you’re out for a walk, find a nice branch for a tree. Pick up nuts, pine cones, etc. Get a can of silver spray and you’ve got decorations. Get some thread to hang them from hooks, or just put them on the table or windowsill.”**

**“I switch off the telly and usually go to bed before the Hogmanay stuff starts and get up and go for a walk next morning. By noon I’m getting on with my day and feeling ok. It’s a lot better than I used to feel.”**

**“I love going for walks in the winter when it’s all frosty.”**

**“Keep going for a swim or playing football – all the things you do the rest of the year. And if you don’t do them, start now.”**



## Getting around – access to transport

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Check what is happening for bus and train services, as there will be fewer services than usual on some days.

The number to ring to check for services in any part of Scotland is 0871 200 2233.

You can also check the website: [www.travelinescotland.com](http://www.travelinescotland.com)

### Tips and hints

- Think ahead about transport for anything on 25/26 December or over the first few days in January.
- Check out options for sharing a taxi with a friend or getting a lift.
- If you are going to a group like AA that is on over the holidays, phone the contact person beforehand and ask if you can share transport with other people.

## Nice things for families or groups of friends to do together

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Here are some suggestions of things that people we know enjoy doing.

### Tips and hints

- Make things like Christmas cards - with glitter and bits of cotton wool for snow. Think Blue Peter and the things you liked doing when you were wee. If you go together you can buy big tubs of glitter and glue etc more cheaply than each buying the small ones.

- Have a film party:

Chose a film that has a plot everyone knows, and that someone has on DVD (or hire it for the night).

Everyone joins in with the dialogue - especially the famous lines - and sings along to the songs.

Come along wearing something from the film if you can.

Our film suggestions for this are: Star Wars (any of them), Sound of Music, Rocky, Blues Brothers, White Christmas and of course Rocky Horror Show.

- Share the food when you get together on someone's house - everyone brings along one thing.

- Do outings in groups, as you can get cheaper deals for the cinema or theatre if you book for more people. Several families and/or friends can go along together. (You need someone to organise this).
- Go for a walk or play football or other sports together.
- Think what you enjoy doing and how you can do it with other people – if that's what you want.
- Don't feel you have to include everyone or a big group. It can just be you and one or two pals.
- Talk it over. Ask what each person enjoys. Once you get talking you'll come up with things that you all be happy doing.

***“One of our holiday treats is to book a football pitch. All of us go – adults, children and grannies. Most of us are rubbish at it. But it’s a good laugh.”***

***“It can be a hard time of year. But it can also be a good excuse to do the silly things you want to do other times but don’t. So this year, just go ahead.”***

***“Be ready to compromise. One week we do what one person wants. Next time, it’s what someone else wants. For me, learning how to mix in a good way with other people has been part of my recovery. Enjoying each other’s company is as or more important than enjoying the thing you are doing.”***

## Nice things to do on your own

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When we talked it over, we thought it was important to have things that you enjoy on your own. Some people prefer to be on their own at this time of year. And having a bit of quiet time is good for everyone.

So these are the things that we enjoy doing when we get a bit of time for ourselves. We hope they'll give you ideas for the ways you like to spend time on your own.

### Tips and hints

Enjoy the things that you like and make you feel good. Here are our suggestions.

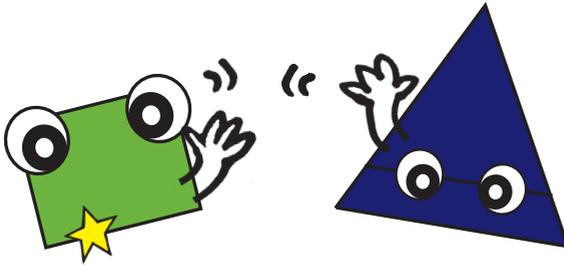
- **Watch a favourite film that takes you feel nice - and you can cry or laugh along with it.**
- **Play your favourite music.**
- **Get some nice smelly, pampering bath stuff. Then have a long soak - and do it each day if you want to.**
- **Go for a walk to your favourite place, so somewhere you want to see but haven't been to before.**
- **Some people find meditation is good - a nice thing to do and good for keeping them well.**
- **Have your favourite food.**
- **Making cards and decorations for the house - with a Christmassy or winter theme or to make the place look special.**

**"I just tell people I have to get back early to feed the cat or walk the dog that I'm looking after for a friend. That works."**

**"I get a bundle of black and white movies and enjoy myself. Marx Brothers, Three Stooges, musicals."**

**"I watch things like the DVDs of Still Game. What ever you think is funny and cheers you up."**

**"Try to plan in some quiet time for yourself. Just tell other people you have something already planned for that day."**



## How to stay clean, sober and well

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### Tips and hints for going to parties

- Take a friend with you who will stay sober. Ask them to tell you, and get you to leave, if they think you are at risk of drinking, or if they feel the party is beginning to get a bit too wild or there is too much alcohol.
- Be in a safe place where people will respect that you are clean and not drinking and won't encourage you to drink or take drugs.
- Leave when you are ready to go.
- Take your own soft drinks.
- If you are visiting a friend or relatives who you know will be drinking, go earlier in the day before they have started drinking.
- Plan for a shorter visit, tell them you'll need to be away early.
- If you know that there could be a problem – which could be people who get you upset as well as alcohol or drugs there – don't go. Or go but only for a short time. Remember that even if you have changed over the past few years, they might not have changed.

- If you want to have a few drinks rather than abstain completely, then plan how you are going to do it. Have a lot of mixers, or bring your own lower-alcohol drinks, or whatever works for you. And stop or switch to non-alcoholic drinks before you think you need to.
- Remember to eat. Eat before you go out, especially if you'll be drinking.

### Tips and hints for looking after yourself generally

- Make sure you have enough food in to last you over the days when the shops are shut. If you've got food at home and are looking after yourself it's easier to cope with all the other hassles and temptations.
- Also remember to stock up with other things that help you be well - like any medicines you take, or remedies for colds and flu.
- Get into a pattern that keeps you well before the holidays start - like going for a walk each day and eating well. There are good ideas in the booklet we did earlier - Supporting Our Recovery and Enjoying Ourselves.

***"If you're with family or friends and they start drinking, just leave."***

***“Drink Irn-Bru. No-one should argue with that.”***

***“Think – I matter. I’m looking after myself.  
Remember that you matter to us and we want  
you to be well and safe.”***

## **Food and drink**

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People who have been drinking or taking drugs often get really thin, because they’re not taking enough food and their body finds it harder to get the goodness from what they do eat. So we want to encourage people who are recovering from or coping with an addiction to eat well and build themselves up.

Also, winter is a time when you just feel you need warm, comforting food to keep out the cold.

So these are our suggestions to help you eat well and feel good.

## Tips and hints

- Have enough healthy stuff in, so you are not just eating sweet things.
- Think of sharing food with a friend or a neighbour. It could be doing your shopping together, so you can split the '2 for 1' offers. Or it could be sharing some of the cooking, even if you decide you both want to eat dinner on your own.
- Have food that does more than one meal, such as a chicken.
- Make soup. Keep it in the fridge for a few days and just take out and heat what you need.
- Remember to stock up with bread and other foods like rice and pasta. They make food go further and keep you going if you get snowed in or the shops are shut longer than you expected.
- Get in vegetables and fruit.
- Look for the recipe cards in supermarkets. They make the shopping easy and are usually use food that is not too expensive. And the recipe tells you want to do.

## Our recipes

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### Christine's fridge cake

- Crush up a packet of digestive biscuits.
- Mix up with a packet of sultanas or raisins.
- Pour in a tin of condensed milk and mix it well.
- Put into a baking tray, pack it down and smooth it out.
- Leave in the fridge to set - overnight is best.
- Tip it out. If it sticks a wee bit at first, just let it warm up.
- Cut into pieces. Munch with cups of tea.

### Easy chocolate bread and butter pudding

- Butter 12 slices of bread (or near enough). If you have a loaf that is a day or 2 old it's even better as it soaks up everything well.
- Cut the crust off and layer the slices in a baking tray or a casserole dish - something that is big enough to take the bread and all the custard and can go into the oven.
- Mix up in a jug a packet of custard mix with milk - whole milk if you have it.
- Add in to the custard half - or a bit more - of a packet of chocolate chips. Stir them together and pour over the bread.

- Leave it in the fridge to all soak in together for a couple of hours if you can.
- Heat the oven to 180C or Gas 4 or 350F.
- Sprinkle over the rest of the chocolate chips and put the dish in the oven.
- Bake for 30 minutes. Have a wee prod, and slip a fork into the middle. If you think it isn't hot enough, leave for another 5-10 minutes.
- Share out, eat and enjoy. You can have it as a pudding or just on it's own.

## Our ideas for good things to do with leftover chicken

- Curry.
- Heat with tomatoes and some herbs and have with pasta - as a sauce or bake for a bit with cooked pasta.
- Sandwiches - with some lettuce and tomato, or with bacon.
- Chicken fried rice.
- Add pieces to a tin of chicken noodle soup, or make your own chicken noodle soup if you want.
- Add pieces to a vegetable soup.
- Use the chicken carcass for stock and make soup. Just put in a pot, cover with water and add more if you can, and add a bit of carrot and half an onion.

After an hour or so, take the vegetables out. Let the stock cool a bit. Drain the stock through a sieve into a bowl or another pot if you can, or just let the stock settle and spoon off any bits that float to the top. Now you use that as the base for your soup.

## Christmassy drinks

- Mix cranberry juice, soda water and float some bits of lime in it.
- Heat apple juice, water and some cinnamon sticks for punch.

## Fruit smoothie

- Peel and cut up a banana.
- Get some fruit - strawberries, blueberries, anything you have or that is not too dear in the shops. Frozen packets that you've let defrost are good.
- Peel and chop up a mango if you can get one.
- Get half a pint of milk.
- Mix it all together in a food processor and blend until it is soft and creamy.
- This will keep in the fridge for a day or 2. But you won't want to leave it that long.

**“Even when I was drinking, I always tried to buy the food first. I knew that if the fridge was full I’d be able to cope better. Now I’ve been sober for a year, I’m feeling great and I’m enjoying what I cook and eat more than ever.”**

**“Making food is a good way to look after yourself and look after your friends.”**

**“Last year I spent most of a day cooking. The time whizzed by and I’d all this nice food at the end of it. I felt that pleased with myself. That was part of my recovery.”**

## Ways to cut the cost of presents

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### Tips and hints

- Agree or set a limit - such as £5. Then you all stick to it but try to be as imaginative as possible within that.
- Instead of several friends or family all buying presents for each other, each person buys for just one person.
- Ask people what they want.
- Make up a list of the things you really want - including the really practical things that we are usually too embarrassed to ask for, like slippers. Give your family and friends your list and ask them for theirs.
- Have presents that are about giving your time. When we talked about it, Sharon decided that someone giving her a few hours ironing is her ideal present.
- Have a presents swap with friends or family a few weeks before Christmas.

Everyone brings along things they have but don't want or need anymore - like clothes that don't fit and the DVD you've seen a dozen times.

You swap them.

The rule is that it doesn't matter if it was a present you got last year - it was appreciated at the time, and is now going to give pleasure to someone else.

You can keep the things you came away with or use them as presents for other people.

- Buy presents at places like charity shops, eBay, Gum Tree and recycling projects.
- Go shopping with a friend if there are offers like 2 for 1 on toys or clothes.
- If you are good at cooking or baking, homemade food is a good present, particularly if wrapped up. You can use left over smaller pieces of wrapping paper, ribbons, etc.

***“If you have a friend like Christine who can make Christmas decorations, see if they can make some for you. You can do a swap and do something for them.”*** (Christine is part of the FAST group and knits great wee snowmen and Santas and tree decorations.)

***“Give foodie things as presents.”***

## Money advice

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One of the big pressures for many people is managing money - not getting into debt.

### Tips and hints

- **The Citizens Advice Bureau can help with money advice and with negotiating with the people you owe money to.**
- **If you need to borrow money, talk to the credit union about whether they will give you a loan – the interest will be a lot less than other sources of credit.**
- **Try to start planning ahead for next year. Look at ways to save money during the year. The credit union can help here too.**

Dumbarton Credit Union  
Glencairn House, 95 High St, Dumbarton  
G82 1LF  
01389 768585

Dalmuir Credit Union Ltd  
15 Abbotsford Road  
Clydebank  
G81 1PA  
0141 952 3776

## Contacts

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Tel: 0141 419 0451  
Email: [admin@otbds.org](mailto:admin@otbds.org)  
[www.otbds.org](http://www.otbds.org)

Outside the Box provides development support to groups across Scotland. We have a grant from the Big Lottery Fund which part-funds the Working Towards project and contributed to the cost of this booklet.



## My notes

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For this year

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For next year:

## Phone numbers



Talk to Frank	0300 123 6600
Alcoholics Anonymous	0845 769 7555
Breathing Space	0800 83 85 87
Narcotics Anonymous	0300 999 1212
Samaritans	08457 90 90 90
Traveline	0871 200 2233

## My phone numbers

