



WISHFISH EBOOKLET

**YOUR
CHRISTMAS
YOUR WAY**

DECEMBER 2020

As we approach what is sure to be a very different Christmas holiday season, it's important to remember that despite the extraordinary year we have all had, we do still have choices.

We can't change the circumstances we find ourselves in. We may not be able to have a non-stop stream of visitors coming to our homes over the festive season.

We may not be able to see the people we love, or alternatively we may be facing up to spending the holidays with people we'd really rather not see at all.

But we do have the choice to work out what's actually attainable this festive season, and what is within our control.

We can choose to become curious about the unknown, and creative about how we navigate our way through it.

We can choose to spend some time thinking about how we want Christmas to be this year, working with what we do have, to create the version of Christmas that's best for us and our families.

With this guide, I'm going to give you some exercises, tips and advice that will help you really focus on how you want your festive season to be this year.

You'll find journaling prompts, guided meditation exercises and a self-care plan that will keep you focused on what's important, and help you set aside what isn't (comparing yourself on social media, anybody?).

Wherever you are and whatever you're doing this year, I'm here to help you make it your best holiday season.

Love, Debbie.x



YOUR CHRISTMAS, YOUR WAY

Before you launch into planning, shopping, decorating and cooking, this exercise will help you really focus in on what you want Christmas to be like this year. It's a great visualisation technique that you can use to ground yourself, and set your intentions.

Once you've completed this exercise you will have a creative visualisation of your holiday season that you can return to, to guide you over the festive period. You will need: a comfortable chair in a quiet space, and a notebook and pen.

1. Sit with your feet flat on the floor and your back as straight as possible.
2. Close your eyes.
3. Take three big, clearing breaths into your stomach. Feel it expand as you inhale, and contract as you exhale. Feel the ground beneath your feet.
4. Begin to picture Christmas. What images can you create in your head that feel important?
5. What colours do you see? Do you see sparkle and glitter, light airy space or the cosy, flickering light of candles?
6. What feeling are you creating? Is it cosy and homely, exciting and full of a sense of adventure, quiet and restful, joyful, solemn? There's no right or wrong answer. Just notice what comes up, and how it makes you feel.



YOUR CHRISTMAS, YOUR WAY

7. Send your awareness down to your fingers. Reach out with your hands and feel the shape of something that signifies Christmas to you. It could be a smooth, round bauble, or a prickly sprig of holly. Move your hands around the shapes created in your mind's eye.
8. Now send your awareness to your nose and think about what smells you associate with Christmas. Consciously think about the scent of a fresh Christmas tree, or a glass of mulled wine.
9. When you are ready, and have created a series of pictures in your mind that encompass how you would like your Christmas to feel, wrap your arms around yourself and give yourself a big hug.
10. Drop your arms down to your side, take three more deep breaths, and open your eyes.
11. Check in with yourself. How do you feel now?



JOURNALING PROMPT

Write down what you learned from this exercise.

Detail the pictures, objects, colours, shapes and smells came up for you, and how they made you feel.

Note down how you felt at the end of the exercise.

How can you create an action plan from this visualisation?



TROUBLESHOOTING: 'THE DREADED COMPARISON TRAP' CHRISTMAS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

The temptation to compare ourselves to others is exacerbated by social media, especially at this time of year.

There will always be those social media accounts full of gorgeous photos that look like something out of Elle Decoration, with the perfectly decorated house, tree and table, and a sky-high pile of presents wrapped in hand-printed paper and tied with sustainable raffia.

It's impossible to measure up – so don't!

The minute we begin to compare ourselves to other people, we start to judge ourselves, and reinforce that inner critic.

What if you could look at this instead as an opportunity to create the Christmas you want, without worrying about what other people are doing?

Often when we're comparing ourselves to others we think we want what they have. In fact what we want is how we think they feel.

We look at that perfectly-decorated Christmas table and think we want the things in the picture, but what we actually want is the feeling that image creates.



ACTION PLAN

Action plan – when the urge to compare yourself kicks in, put down your phone and try this!

1. Go back to your visualisation. Remind yourself that that's what you're looking to create, not a photo from a stranger's life on the internet.
2. In your journal, write down three actions you can take to help create your Christmas.
3. If it helps, take a break from social media this Christmas. If you can't see those images, you can't compare yourself to them!



YOUR CHRISTMAS SELF-CARE PLAN

Here's your basic self-care plan to make sure you look after yourself this Christmas. It is a time for giving, but it's important you make sure you're doing Christmas for you too, not just for everybody else.

1. Keep to a routine, if you can. This will help you make the most of your time.
2. Take the time to enjoy and appreciate your home. Whatever your circumstances and wherever you happen to be, this is your home and you deserve to enjoy it.
3. Set a budget. If, like many people, you are paid the week before Christmas and left with six weeks until January payday, create a six-week budget.
4. Create a rough food plan. You don't have to plan every single meal, but having an idea of what you'll be eating helps avoid panic-buying in the supermarket on Christmas Eve, followed by chucking out four bags of potatoes and three bags of sprouts on Boxing Day.
5. Incorporate simple acts of service. How well do you know your neighbours and the people close to you, and can you check in on them over the holiday period? When doing the food shop, can you buy something extra for the food bank? Could you donate food, old clothes or even blankets to a local shelter? Get curious about what's going on in your local area and how you can make a difference to your community.
6. Take time out in nature. Go for a walk, round up the kids and take the family on a scavenger hunt, go for a jog or bike ride whatever gets you out outside will boost your mood.



YOUR CHRISTMAS SELF-CARE PLAN

7. If you have time, learn or try something new. Take up knitting or drawing or walk the neighbours' dog.
8. Consciously make yourself a warm drink – a hot chocolate with cream and marshmallows, or a proper coffee from ground beans. Don't drink it on the go, sit down somewhere comfortable or scenic and focus on enjoying your drink. Take the time to be still.
9. Create a corner of your home that's your quiet space. It could be a bedroom, the spare room, a corner of the living room or just a cosy chair. Whatever space you have, how can you get creative to make it yours? Return to this space every time you need to reset, reflect or just take time out.
10. Any time you need to reset or recharge, here's a lovely meditative exercise that can help calm and ground you.



MEDITATION EXERCISE

Sit in your quiet spot where you can see your Christmas tree, or a favourite Christmas decoration, candle, flower arrangement or piece of foliage.

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Take three deep, clearing breaths into your stomach.

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Focus in on your Christmas tree or chosen object. Look intently at the texture, colours, shapes and definition. Examine the sharpness of the needles, and the patterns created by the lights. Really take in every detail.

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Soften your focus and turn your attention to your ears. What sounds can you hear?

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Focus on the furthest sound from you. Really listen to it.

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Now focus on the closest sound to you. It may even be the sound of your own breathing. Really tune in and connect with this sound.

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When you are ready, focus back in on your Christmas tree or festive object.

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End the exercise with three more deep breaths. This is a lovely, calming mindfulness exercise that will bring you back into the moment.



PREPARING FOR THE NEW YEAR

As if the hustle and bustle of Christmas weren't enough, it's closely followed by New Year. Personally, I find New Year to be the most overrated time of year! I prefer to use this time for reflection and intention-setting, as well as taking practical action for the year ahead.



JOURNALING PROMPT

I call this exercise a GAIL, and it's a really lovely way to take stock as the year draws to a close.

Thinking back over 2020....

G: What are you Grateful for this year

A: What have you Accomplished in 2020 – however big or small, if you're proud of it, write it down

I: How have you Improved this year

L: What have you Learned about yourself that you can carry forwards in 2021?

As a starting point, we have all learned to be resilient this year, coping with the extraordinary events and changes we've experienced.

Make sure you give yourself credit for getting through it.

YOUR NEW YEAR SELF-CARE PLAN

Here are some other exercises and actions you can do in the 'Twixmas' period between Christmas and New Year to help you take stock and look ahead to 2021:

1. Take some time to organise your photographs from 2020. Create a folder and choose one or two images from each month that really encapsulate 2020 for you. Once you have chosen your photos, how can you display and share them creatively? You may like to send them to be printed and create a photograph album, or put together a digital album and send the link to family and friends.
2. If you lost somebody this year, can you think of any ways you can honour and celebrate their life?
3. Using your GAIL exercise for inspiration, write down in your journal what you would like to take forwards from this year. What have you enjoyed about the year, even with the difficult circumstances we've had to deal with, that you can take with you into 2021?
4. Finally, turn your attention to what is within your control for 2021. What's one action you can take now to ease your transition into the year ahead? You may like to declutter your home or do an early spring clean. If your financial year ends in December 2020, get everything filed and put away by the end of the year.



A FINAL NOTE

Hopefully this guide has given you lots of inspiration and ideas for ways you can prioritise your wellness this holiday season.

But if you do find you need extra help and support this year, don't be afraid to ask.

Many people find Christmas difficult for all sorts of reasons, and there is lots of formal and informal support out there. Samaritans helpline is available 24 hours on 116 123.

MORE INFORMATION

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