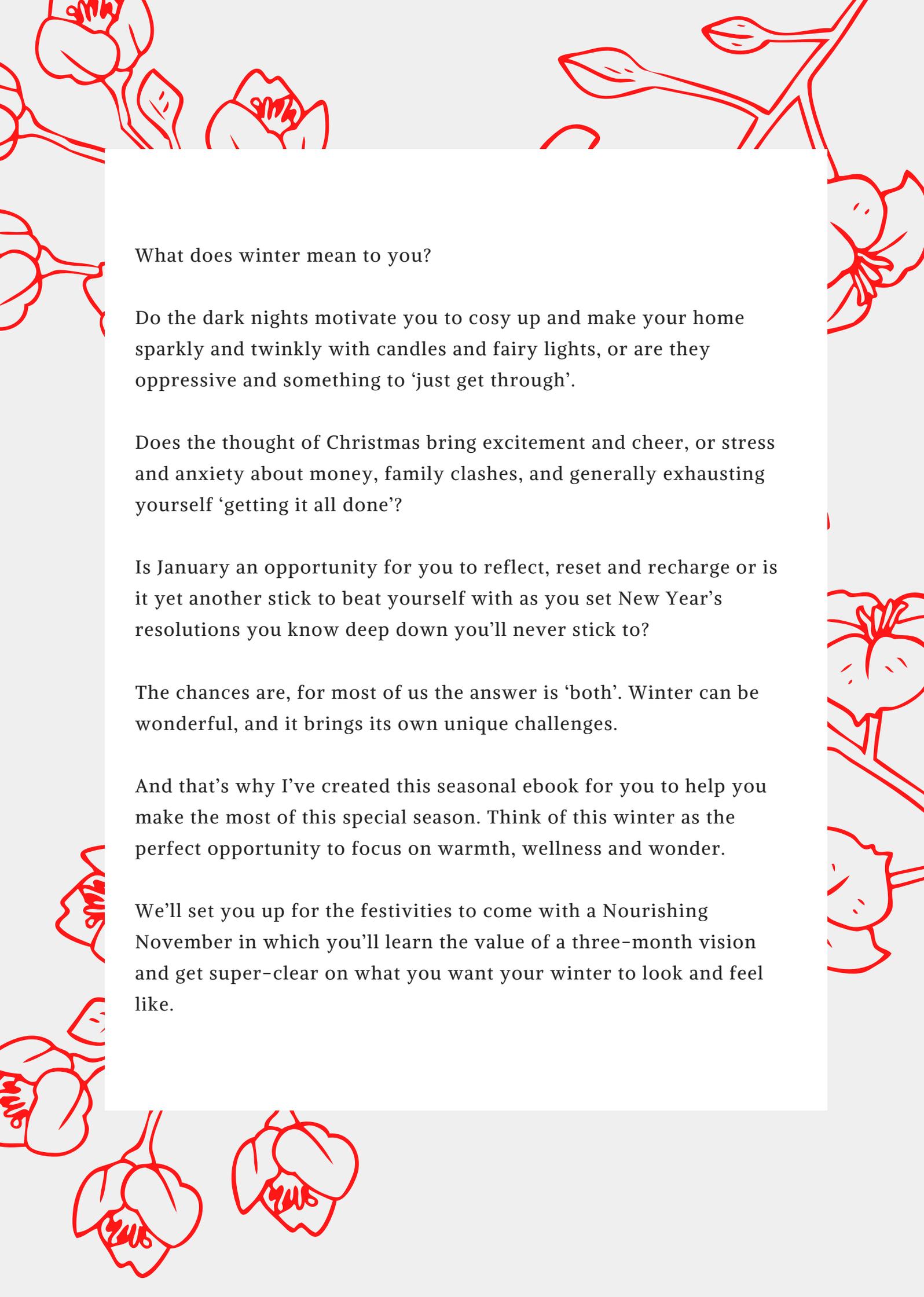




WISHFISH EBOOKLET

**WINTER
WELLNESS**

NOVEMBER 2021



What does winter mean to you?

Do the dark nights motivate you to cosy up and make your home sparkly and twinkly with candles and fairy lights, or are they oppressive and something to ‘just get through’.

Does the thought of Christmas bring excitement and cheer, or stress and anxiety about money, family clashes, and generally exhausting yourself ‘getting it all done’?

Is January an opportunity for you to reflect, reset and recharge or is it yet another stick to beat yourself with as you set New Year’s resolutions you know deep down you’ll never stick to?

The chances are, for most of us the answer is ‘both’. Winter can be wonderful, and it brings its own unique challenges.

And that’s why I’ve created this seasonal ebook for you to help you make the most of this special season. Think of this winter as the perfect opportunity to focus on warmth, wellness and wonder.

We’ll set you up for the festivities to come with a Nourishing November in which you’ll learn the value of a three-month vision and get super-clear on what you want your winter to look and feel like.

Then we'll dive into Delightful December with a focus on connection, cutting down on stress and really taking time for you and your loved ones over the holidays.

And finally, we'll start a Joyful January on the right foot with zero silly and unrealistic resolutions, crash diets and punishing budgets, and lots of reflection, intention-setting and a good hard look at what gets in the way of you achieving your goals.

Sound good? Wrap up warm, get comfy, grab a hot chocolate and let's get started!

Love, Debbie.x



NOURISHING NOVEMBER

After the back-to-school bustle of September and the half-term and Halloween hullabaloo of October, November feels like a bit of an 'in between' month.

It's also one of the most beautiful months of the year as outside the trees display the last of their fiery autumn colours and piles of leaves beg to be kicked up and crunched through on crisp, frosty mornings.

But while Christmas and all the associated fanfare is just around the corner, as is winter proper, November offers us a chance to take something of a breath and a pause.

The longer, darker nights allow us space and time to cosy up, reflect, and prepare for what's to come.



SETTING YOUR VISION

If you have a vision of what you're aiming for, you'll make better decisions, because you're really clear about what you want. There's real science behind this.

You might have heard of 'confirmation bias', which is a handy habit our brains have of scanning for evidence that backs up, or confirms, something we already believe.

To give you an idea of how this works, try this fun exercise:

Look around your space, wherever you happen to be sitting now, and notice everything in that space that's red. Give yourself a few minutes and really notice, and count, every single red thing in your space.

Now close your eyes.

How many green things did you notice?



Chances are, you didn't notice any – because your brain was so busy looking for red things! That's how confirmation bias works. You tell your brain what to look for, and it'll look for it.

So, if get really specific and clear about your vision, really picture it, go through the intricate details – that's what you're programming that brilliant brain of yours to look out for. Fascinating, isn't it?

When it comes to goal-setting and planning I love a three-month vision. Three months is just 90 days, a very manageable time period, but long enough to create real and lasting changes.



CREATE A VISION BOARD

A vision board is a really powerful tool to help you get super specific about your ideas and goals. It's a visual representation you can use to help your brain develop that handy confirmation bias.

It's possible to create a perfectly good vision board online these days but I always prefer to create a physical board. The physical process helps you create an emotional connection with what you're creating. So, grab a load of catalogues, magazines and print off pictures you like online, and start creating your winter vision board.



Get really creative and enjoy the process. Take your time, make sure you're in a quiet and comfortable place where you can really tune in and connect with yourself.

Think about what you want this winter to look like, smell like, sound like, taste like and feel like. Think about how you want to feel.

How do you picture yourself? Are you laughing and surrounded by family – then that's your cue to focus on connecting with the people you love this season.



CREATE A VISION BOARD

Perhaps your vision board is covered in warm, twinkly lights and features cosy blankets, soft candlelight and festive scenes around the Christmas tree – so maybe your vision this year is to create a really warm and welcoming home where you can enjoy the rejuvenating and restful potential of winter.

Or maybe you're all about the brisk chilly walks, spiders' webs glistening in the morning frost, and woolly hats and mittens, and your vision for this season is to get outside, connect with nature and feel strong, powerful, and healthy this winter.

Whatever appeals to you, stick it on. You don't need to have just one theme, go with whatever catches your eye and whatever inspires you.

Think about how you want to feel this winter and try and represent ways you can unwind and prioritise your own self-care. Include Christmas, but don't just focus on Christmas. Think about the whole season, the build-up to Christmas, the aftermath, New Year and beyond.

Once you're finished, put your board somewhere prominent where you'll see it every day so you can remind yourself again and again of what you want to achieve and how you want to feel this season.



NURTURING YOURSELF

Take some time to check in with yourself before the Christmas rush kicks off and ask yourself the following questions:

- **How am I feeling now?**
- **How do I want to feel at the end of this month, the end of December and the end of January?**
- **What do I need more of this winter?**
- **What do I need less of this winter?**
- **What three things could I do for myself between now and the end of November?**
- **What three things could I do for myself between now and the end of December?**
- **What three things could I do for myself between now and the end of January?**

The answers to these questions form the basis of a self-care action plan, so put them in your diary or planner – and make sure you do them!



Make it easy for yourself. Book the tickets, schedule in the time, block out the date, arrange the childcare, tell your loved ones you're not available that afternoon, write it in the calendar, take the time off work. Whatever it is you need to do to make your plans happen, do it now.

That way, when the time comes, you won't be frantically trying to organise everything at the last minute or worse, so overwhelmed you don't even bother. All you'll have to do is show up!



DELIGHTFUL DECEMBER

Christmas seems to come earlier each year and the chances are it'll all kick off on December first. Out come the decorations, up goes the tree, and a month of chaos begins.

Christmas last year was certainly very different for all of us, and this year it's likely to be different again. Perhaps you're seeing family again for the first time in a long time or finally able to catch up with friends.



Maybe you're planning on going all-out to make up for last year and hoping for a month of gatherings, parties and celebrations.

Or perhaps you and your loved ones are still shielding or just generally less keen on big rowdy gatherings and festivities. You may be mourning a loss, or dealing with uncertainty, ill-health or redundancy. Your circumstances might not lend themselves to celebrations.

Whatever your circumstances and plans, December doesn't need to be stressful – I promise!



TAKE TIME FOR YOU

At its heart, the holiday season is about connection.

Not piles of gifts, or tables groaning with food, or parties full of random strangers when you'd really rather be at home watching a movie with your nearest and dearest (just me?).

And the most important connection you can nurture this December is the connection you have with yourself.

Make a promise to yourself this December to put your own self-care at the top of the list.

It's been another extraordinary and tiring year. Grab any opportunity to rest and recharge with both hands.



SELF CARE ISN'T SELFISH!

How many times have you put off doing something nice for yourself or not asked for help, support or even just an afternoon with absolutely no plans or interruptions whatsoever because you don't want to appear selfish?

We all know that in the whirlwind of work parties, social gatherings, school Christmas plays, and goodness knows what else self-care can go to the bottom of the pile.

And many of us aren't that good at prioritising ourselves even without all the other pressures.



But if you spend this Christmas running around after everybody else you're going to end up exhausted and resentful, and worst of all, you'll have missed a heap of opportunities to connect with the very people who matter to you the most – including yourself.

Put that way, self-care doesn't sound so selfish after all, does it?



YOUR CHRISTMAS SELF-CARE ACTION PLAN

Step away from Instagram.

Social media is jam-packed at this time of year with gorgeous photos straight out of a glossy magazine of picture-perfect houses, trees and huge piles of gifts complete with faux-modest captions about gratitude. It's no wonder we can all slip into a comparison slump. So do yourself a favour and turn all notifications off, unfollow those accounts that make you grit your teeth (you know the ones I mean) and if you can, just delete the app from your phone altogether. Look at it this way – what if you used all that time you spent scrolling and comparing and feeling bad about yourself to focus on you, instead?

Set a budget.

Boring, yes, but once it's done, you'll know exactly how much you're free to spend and how much you'll need to set aside. Don't forget that most employers will pay December's wages before Christmas so your budget will need to last the six weeks until January pay day.

Spend time looking at your vision board.

Check it every day to remind yourself of what you want to focus on over the longer-term. It's easy to get distracted by the fanfare of the holidays, and your vision board can help keep you on track with your bigger goals.

Don't over schedule yourself.

Be realistic about your time and use it well. Don't say yes to that second party invitation if you're going to be rushing from one event to another, or likely to be tired from a late night the night before.

Book in time for yourself and treat it as non-negotiable.

Schedule it into your diary as you would a work event or social occasion and give it the same degree of attention and respect. If you've booked in an experience or treat for yourself, like a massage or a night at the theatre, don't try to cram it in around everybody else's schedule. Give yourself time to get ready and arrive early so you're not stressed and chasing your tail, and time to recharge afterwards instead of dashing on to the next thing.



FOCUSING ON CONNECTION

Your time and your attention are the two most valuable assets within your control. Use them well.

Make sure you've given the most time and attention to the things that matter the most to you.

This could be your family and friends, or it could be serving others, volunteering in the community to make a difference, or just checking in on your neighbours.



Whatever it is you say matters the most, should get the most of your time and attention. So have a look at your diary.

If family is the most important thing to you but your diary is full of festive work events, you're not setting yourself up to succeed.



MERRY TWIXMAS

The period of time between Christmas and New Year is often the most restful and magical of the entire holiday season.

After the big day itself, there's a natural pause before the celebration of New Year and this is a really fertile time for reflection, resetting and recharging.

You might want to spend the entire time curled up with a book eating the rest of the Christmas food and just generally allowing yourself the freedom of having no plans – and that's absolutely fine!

I like to do a journaling exercise called a GAIL, as it's a really lovely way to take stock as the year draws to a close.

Thinking back over 2021:

G: What are you Grateful for this year?

A: What have you Accomplished this year?

I: How have you Improved this year?

L: And what have you Learned about yourself this year?

A very visual exercise that can really build connections too is to sit down with your loved ones and go through your photos from the past year.

Create a folder and choose one or two images per month that really sum up the year for you.

It's a really enjoyable process that'll prompt you to reflect and process the year and can lead to some lovely conversations as you share memories and experiences.

At the end, display and share your chose photos creatively.



JOYFUL JANUARY

Have you ever noticed how all the talk in January is about deprivation?

Whether it's cutting back on spending after a Christmas blowout, or restricting your eating so you can lose the festive pounds, the focus is well and truly on what you can't have.

As if it weren't already one of the darkest, coldest and most miserable months of the year – and the longest, as anybody who has ever had to wait for a January payday will attest – we go and make it that much harder for ourselves with well-intentioned resolutions. I actually think we should just ban New Year's resolutions, as most of them are about removing joy.

This year, let's sidestep all that doom and gloom altogether and aim for a truly joyful January!



WHAT BRINGS YOU JOY?

Grab a pen and a piece of paper and write down all the things you can think of that bring you joy.

(Chances are, you won't write anything about budgeting, dieting or five HIIT classes in a week).

When we think of the things that bring joy to our souls and lift our hearts, they're hardly ever related to how thin we are or how much money we spend. Most of the joy we find is in the everyday.

A big cuddle from your child. Your dog getting excited about going for a walk. Cooking a meal from scratch and enjoying every single mouthful. A walk through a winter landscape, feeling the frosty grass crunching beneath your feet. Warming up by the fire on a chilly evening. Perhaps you love to dance, or run, or swim, or play a musical instrument, or paint or draw.... the possibilities for joy are endless.

Imagine if you could fill your January with moments of joy, instead of moments of deprivation. If your goal for the month could be to get out for a walk a few times a week and breathe in that fresh winter air, or to finally check out that yoga class, or to cook a meal from scratch with seasonal ingredients once a week. You'll still end the month fitter and healthier – but without any of that deprivation mindset.



SET YOURSELF UP FOR SUCCESS

Now is the perfect time to go back to your vision board and update it ready for the year ahead. As you do so, reflect on how the vision board has served you so far.

What did you manage to create as a result of having a visual reminder of your values and goals?

Was it helpful being able to see your vision board? Did it give you a reason to keep moving forwards? If you found the board effective, you might want to look at other ways you can alter your environment to keep you focused and on track.

Your home is your own personal space, and you are free to use it to display reminders of the version of you that's just round the corner. Think about all those hours you spend looking at the Netflix or Amazon logo – those logos imprint on our brains and give a sense of familiarity.

You can counter that by creating your own imprint and sense of familiarity with your version of the future. It doesn't matter how big or small your ideas and goals are. Having a vision isn't just for a certain type of person. We all have a right to a sense of mastery over our future.

If you do choose to set individual goals or resolutions, ask yourself if they are realistic. Perhaps you want to cut down on screen time, so you've decided you're going to turn your phone off every night at 9pm without fail, for a month.

Challenge your thinking – how practical is this solution? If you know in your heart of hearts you can't commit to it but you're saying it to feel good, you're stitching yourself up.

What about turning your phone off at 9pm one day a week – try it out, acknowledge it, and think about how it made you feel. If it worked well, try for two night. Build it up, create a new habit.



WHAT ABOUT WHEN THINGS DON'T GO TO PLAN?

Often when our good intentions or resolutions fail, we respond by really knuckling down and getting tougher on ourselves. We listen to that inner critic that tells us we're not good enough and makes us feel stupid and small and we resolve to get even more restrictive and draconian in the future.

Why do we do this? Chances are we're already feeling bad about not keeping to our resolutions! And it's also likely that 'getting tough' on ourselves hasn't worked out in the past.

Instead, try thinking about what your inner coach would say. **How can you bring compassion to yourself and use this as an opportunity to identify what you need?**

How can you compassionately adapt and plan for the obstacles you know are in your way? You might want to lose 20lb, but are there biscuits in the cupboard calling your name and does their voice get louder when you're sat there trying to do something you find boring and difficult – like a tax return?

Instead of beating yourself up, can you choose to think 'oh that's interesting, I wonder why my brain has chosen to remind me of the biscuits at this particular moment?' Can you get curious about it, and start creating understanding?



REMEMBER GRATITUDE

During a long and often tough month like January, it can feel like there's nothing to be grateful for.

But just like the things that bring us joy, often the things we are grateful for aren't the big things, like a dramatic weight-loss or a new job. It's the smaller, everyday things.

Train your brain to notice the good by writing down one thing a day that you're grateful for. Keep them in a jar and then, at the end of the month, pull them out and read through them.

In the toughest month of the year, you've not only kept going but you've actively found the good in every single day. I can't think of a better way to set yourself up for the year ahead than that!



A FINAL NOTE

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

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

Many people find lockdown and life more generally 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

For more information please contact Debbie, Laura and Gail on 07496 328 745 / 07896 998 136.

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