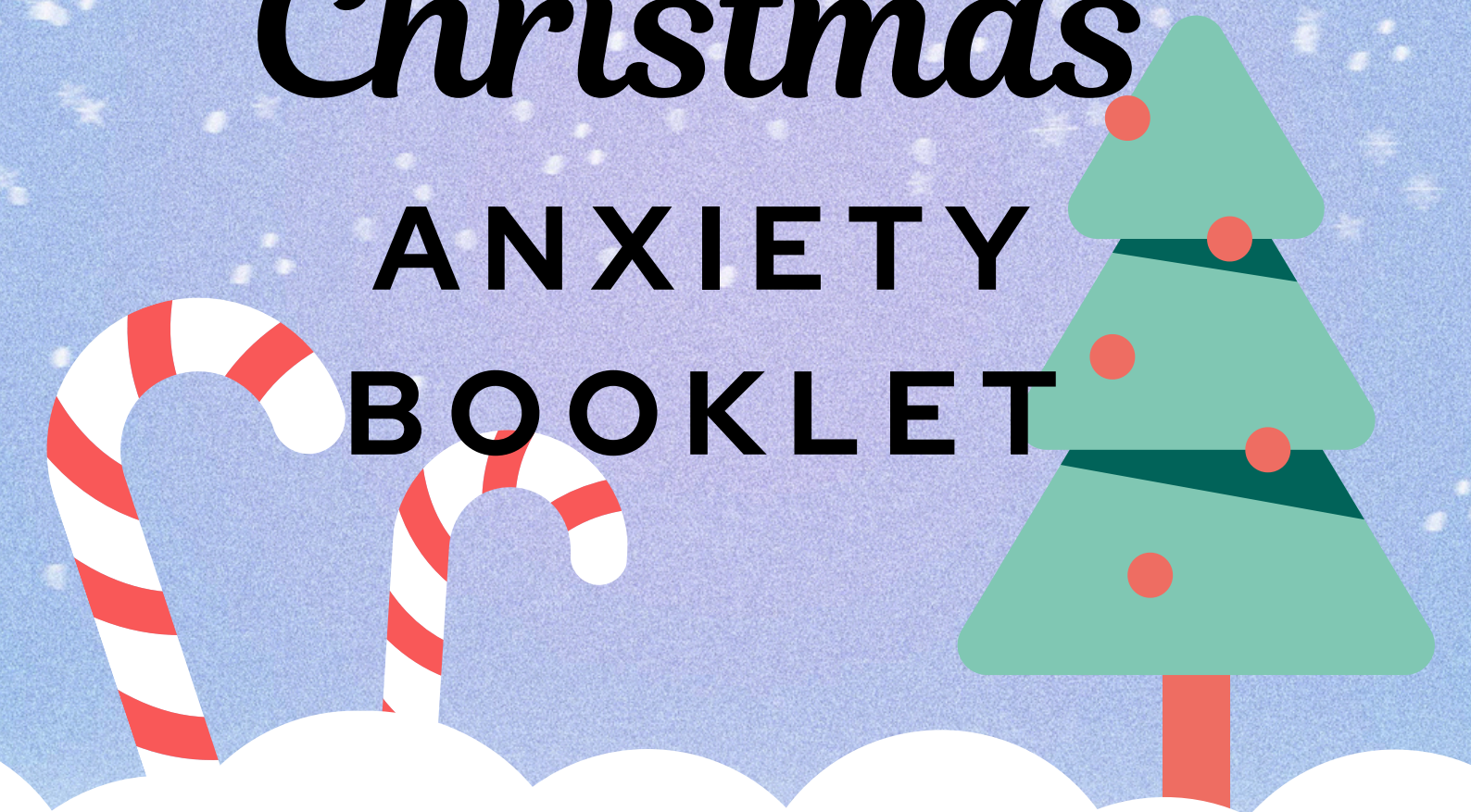




Christmas

ANXIETY
BOOKLET

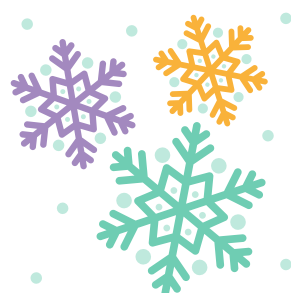


Anxiety UK

While the holidays can be a time of fun and relaxation, for those of us who live with anxiety, the festive season can represent extra pressure and stress. It can feel overwhelming as the to-do list grows and we juggle the additional obligations that come with this time of year.

As Christmas approaches, it's important not to forget to take care of ourselves. It's okay to feel extra anxious at this time of year. Practicing self-care and understanding will help reduce festive stress.

**Wishing you a happy, relaxing,
and safe Christmas however
you choose to spend it.**





Why am I anxious at Christmas?

Financial difficulties can cause a great deal of anxiety at Christmas with presents to buy, outfits to pick out, and all the festive 'essentials' such as decorations, a tree, and don't forget the wrapping paper! Navigating your way through crowded shopping centres can also prove to be a nightmare...

Over 2 in 5 Brits feel stressed during the festive season. And 25% feel that Christmas is more stressful than the rest of the year.

- YouGov (2019)

3 in 10 Brits claim their mental health takes a complete 'nosedive' over the Christmas period. Most commonly, this being due to money pressures, entertaining guests & keeping others happy.

- Mental Health UK (2021)

For a lot of us, there may be no concrete reason why Christmas causes our anxiety to spike. Darker evenings and colder weather can have an impact on our daily lives and the lack of sunlight may lead to low mood.





Mindfulness

Christmas can be a very busy time, so it is important to take a couple of minutes to relax each day. Mindfulness can help you refocus, acknowledge your own thoughts and feelings, and reinstate calm.



Take 5 minutes to notice 5 things in your day that usually go unnoticed...These can be objects, people, or events in your daily routine like the warm coat you have in the winter, the stillness of the morning after it has snowed, or the sound of the birds outside.

"Getting outside for a walk feels so beneficial, even if the weather is bad. Just taking a moment in nature to breathe. This exercise in turn helps me to sleep better!" - Hayley

Body scan exercise: Begin by focusing on your feet and how they feel against the ground. Now begin to scan slowly from your feet to your head, focusing on the sensations you feel through your body, letting yourself relax as you breathe.

Mindfulness is a helpful practice for anyone, especially those of us who experience anxiety.

With time, we are able to tune into the present rather than focusing on what might happen in the future.





Lifestyle

Christmas can be a particularly hectic and stressful time. It's important to set your own pace and make sure you are taking care of your body and mind.

Sleep



Stress can majorly interfere with your sleep, leading to insomnia and restless nights. Make sure you give yourself time to unwind in the evening before bed; run a hot bath, read a book, or enjoy some herbal tea.

Anxiety can be isolating and the holidays can be especially difficult as it may seem like everyone around you is enjoying the season whilst you are struggling. Don't bottle up your feelings or feel pressured to pretend everything is fine.

Feel



Eat



If you are prone to feeling guilty for enjoying a festive treat, it's important to not punish yourself but also not to feel pressured to overindulge if you don't want to. For more info on nutrition and anxiety, download our helpful guide [here!](#)

Make sure you are remembering to sit down, clear your head, and have a rest during a busy day. Even taking five minutes away from a screen or a busy environment will help diffuse excess stress and unwind.

Rest





Tips from the Team

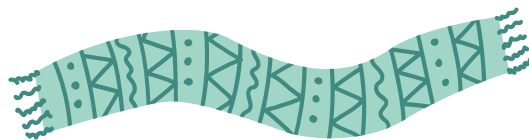
Cooking and baking as mindfulness techniques

Getting into the kitchen to make a tasty meal can be so relaxing. As soon as you get the chopping board out and start focusing on preparing the veg, you quickly forget the woes and worries of the day as you concentrate on cutting the carrots and onions and not your fingers!



Walking works wonders, just be sure to wrap up!

Getting out for a walk is not only good exercise but also encourages your brain to release endorphins. Walking has lots of benefits such as helping you to sleep better, improving your mood, and keeping your heart healthy. Explore your local area during the day to ensure you get the sunlight on your face too!





Tips from the Team

Tend to the garden for a little escape

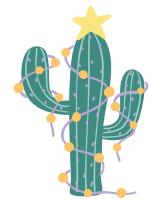
Whilst many might think that winter is not the best time to be in the garden, we couldn't disagree more. Going outdoors at any time of year is good for one's wellbeing but in winter it is particularly invigorating and refreshing. Gardening allows you to really take your mind off anxiety by placing your focus elsewhere.



Remember that Christmas is a specific social time, and even the most confident of people who do not ordinarily live with higher levels of anxiety, can struggle. You're not on your own.

Christmas is full of social constructs; there's no law that says you must attend every party, become a social butterfly, or eat your pudding at the end of the meal.

Think about what you value about Christmas and stick to your own values rather than other people's. You can decide what the shape of Christmas looks like for you.



Knitting is another activity that many people find helpful when experiencing anxiety...



We've teamed up with Beki Rymza, founder of bespoke knitwear brand 'Where's Me Jumper', who has designed a Christmas jumper exclusively for Anxiety UK. Download the pattern [**here**](#) (all proceeds to Anxiety UK).



Set boundaries or reach out

It's OK to say no...

If you are not looking forward to upcoming social events and you find yourself thinking about them constantly - you don't have to go.

Be honest about how you're feeling and explain why you can't make a particular event.

Sometimes others aren't aware of the toll anxiety can take and it can be helpful to share.

Be open...

Cancelling plans can leave us feeling guilty. Explain that your anxiety is bad now, but you would like to reschedule for the future or do something else instead.

Give plenty of notice if you need to cancel an event - it's polite and helps other people manage their own anxiety by making them feel prepared.

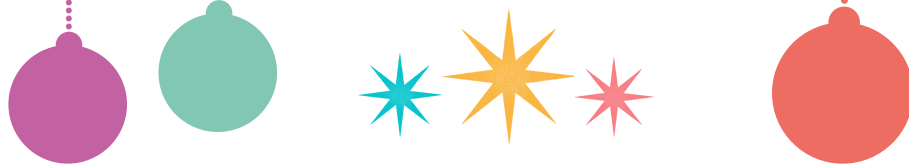
Connect...

Attending a service at a church, mosque, synagogue or other place of worship will connect you with others. Or you could see what is on at your local community centre. Find an online chat room or become a pen pal. Many helplines are open over the Christmas period. If you have any questions, maybe [Anxia](#) can help?

Volunteer...

If you struggle with lack of human contact at Christmas, you can use the time to help others and make a difference.

Raising money for a good cause can be a great way to connect with others or consider volunteering to support others. If this is on your list for 2024 see details of how to volunteer and/or fundraise for us [here](#).



Manage expectations

Don't worry about things that are out of your control...

Try to focus on only things you can change; like making sure you leave yourself enough time to travel somewhere on a certain day, or picking out a party outfit you feel awesome in.

Try to forget the notion of 'perfect'...

Whilst the media will always present the perfect Christmas, what is really important is the Christmas that is right for you. This looks different for everyone so just do what makes you content.

It is the thought that counts...

It can feel great to treat loved ones to special gifts but not if it's at the expense of our own wellbeing. Finances can cause stress at this time of year but consider how much you are comfortable spending. If the cost of buying gifts for multiple people is adding up, suggest 'Secret Santa' because finding the perfect present for that one person feels great too. You could even get creative and hand-make your gifts which can reduce costs and also makes for a particularly special treat!

Consider what is really important ...

The cost of Christmas isn't in its financial value but the value of what the season means to you. This could be spending time with loved ones or it could be planning a quiet day in with the latest film release you haven't had time to watch.



Anxiety UK's Little Helpers

Could you be our next fantastic festive fundraiser or super supporter?

During this festive season we need your support more than ever. It sounds like a cliché, but it's true - every penny you donate really helps! To make a fast, fuss free donation, use the QR code or link below:



Click here to donate via our website

Thinking about doing a fundraiser over the festive season?

We've compiled a [list of activities](#) to help inspire you.

Do good for you

A 2022 study, (Cregg & Cheavens, 2022) has shown that acts of kindness not only benefit the recipient but you as the supporter!

**Click here to
fundraise for us**

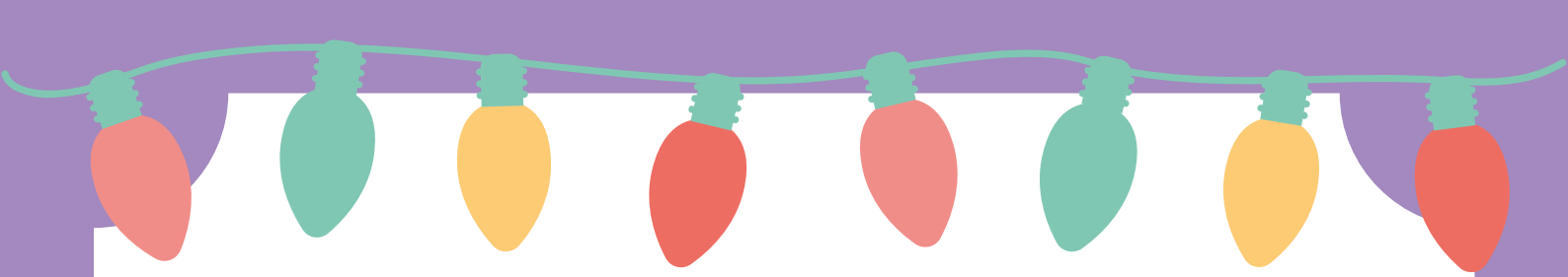
Do good for us

We rely entirely on the generosity of our supporters and fundraisers in order to continue to provide essential services to those affected by anxiety, stress and anxiety based depression.

Do good for the environment

We have pledged to [plant a tree](#) for every fundraiser that signs up to fundraise for Anxiety UK.





December can be a tricky time of year for many, particularly those that live with anxiety.

Self-care infoline: 03444 775 774

Our self-care infoline is available 24/7

Plus, Ask Anxia®, our friendly e-helper service is available 24/7, 365 days a year at **anxietyuk.org.uk** or via the free Anxia® app (here on Apple, or here on Android).

Other organisations that can help include:

Samaritans (open 24 hours, 365 days per year)

Call: **116 123**

NHS Urgent Mental Health Helpline:

111 option 2



WISHING YOU
ALL A VERY

*Merry
Christmas*

FROM
EVERYONE AT...

Anxiety UK