



Wishing you a happy, peaceful Christmas and every good wish for 2020

Nollaig shona agus athbhliain faoi mhaise daoibh go léir.

from the CSEAS team

CHRISTMAS THOUGHTS



It can be helpful to give some thought to the type of festive period you would like to have this year or, to what Christmas means to you. Christmas is meant to give us a rest and be an oasis in the middle of winter. If you are of Christian belief, it is a time to cherish the meaning of Christmas for you. For those of other religious beliefs or none, remember that long before Christianity, mid-winter fest was celebrated around the time of the winter solstice (21-22 Dec) to remind people of the change from darkness to light as the days started to grow longer and nights shorter.

Is Christmas an enjoyable time for you or is it filled with stress and pressure? Maybe you need to ask how much of this stress is unnecessary. Start by letting go of some of the excessive expectations you might be putting on yourself. Plan a Christmas that will be relaxing, enjoyable and peaceful for you.

If you have been bereaved during the year or find Christmas a sad time because of loss, try to take one day at a time. Remember the loved ones you miss. If possible spend some time with family, friends, neighbours. Christmas will come and it will go.

Christmas can be a feast for the senses. Enjoy the lights, textures, food, smells, music and atmosphere.

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Try to find time over Christmas to do things that help you to relax. For example:

- Sleep in
- Go for a walk
- Read a book
- Meet with friends
- Watch a film with the family
- Meditate

If you find Christmas a difficult time and it would help to talk, please contact the CSEAS at 0761 000 030



MINDING YOUR WINTER HEALTH



Shorter days and lengthy periods of darkness in winter can have an effect on our mental health. Indeed when we are working full-time, we are often not outdoors in daylight hours during the week. This can result in low mood, tiredness, lack of exercise and can challenge our mental health. When our mental health is challenged, we may be less inclined to look after ourselves physically, socially and emotionally. So how can we best mind ourselves?

Awareness is key! If we are aware that we find the winter months difficult, then we are in a position to do something about it. Here are a few tips for minding our mental health:

- Build 30 minutes of walking/exercise into the day
- Eat regularly and healthily – low mood can have a connection with low blood sugars
- Get enough sleep
- Stay connected – meet up with friends
- Check in with family, friends, neighbours, or ask them to check-in with you
- Do things you enjoy
- Get creative – through music, writing, painting, gardening
- Talk to a trusted person about how you are feeling
- Practice mindful breathing - in through your nose, hold for a few seconds and slowly out through your mouth
- Challenge your thinking - is it helpful, fact or opinion, is there another way of looking at this?

You might try essential oils to sooth your spirit. Some people find that lavender and chamomile help to relax whereas citrus oils such as orange, lemon and lemongrass will help to lift the spirit if you are feeling a little down. Place a few drops into a warm bath or burn them in an oil burner at home.

VINTAGE CHRISTMAS

Natural Pot Pouri

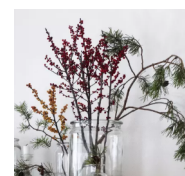
The smells of Christmas can include the following boiled in a saucepan and then left to simmer for hours. Just top up with water and reheat to reuse again.

- 2 - 4 cinnamon sticks
- 1 tbls whole cloves
- a few oranges halved
- ½ tsp dried nutmeg or ginger
- some sprigs of pine (if available)
- cranberries can also be added if you wish
- half to three quarters fill the saucepan with water



Decorating for Christmas doesn't have to be expensive

- Fill a glass jar with branches and berries
- Tie some cinnamon sticks together with string
- Arrange pine cones and evergreens in a bowl





*"I don't think Christmas is necessarily about things. It's about being good to one another."
Carrie Fisher*

"We are better throughout the year for having, in spirit, become a child again at Christmastime."

Laura Ingalls Winter

*"May you never be too grown up to search the skies on Christmas Eve"
Unknown*



"Just remember, the true spirit of Christmas lies in your heart"

The Polar Express



CHRISTMAS AND END OF YEAR REFLECTIONS

Do your Christmas traditions still work for you? Time brings about change in our lives and circumstances so it can often be helpful to rethink our usual Christmas traditions. Have your family circumstances changed? Perhaps adult children or friends have moved abroad or your family may have lost a loved one this year. Here are a few suggestions:

In the weeks before Christmas:

- attend a tree lighting ceremony in your community
- take a walk in a local park to collect greenery and pine cones
- have a candle lighting (safely) in your home
- help somebody less well off than you

Christmas time:

- go for a walk with family after breakfast
- arrange a call with family/friends abroad (Skype/Facetime/What's App etc) and open Christmas gifts together
- read a Christmas story or watch a Christmas film

These are just ideas to get you thinking. Perhaps reflect on what would suit your family this Christmas.

Christmas and the end of the year often invites us to pause and reflect... to take stock of the year and to look to a plan for the year ahead. It is a great time to acknowledge all that we have accomplished and experienced, to recharge our energy levels and to welcome in new beginnings. These questions might help to reflect at year end:

- What went well?
- What could we do more of?
- Who might we connect with more?

If it would help to talk through any of the above with somebody, your Employee Assistance Officer is here to help explore options with you.

NOLLAIG NA MBAN

"The best way to predict the future is to create it"

Abraham Lincoln

Nollaig na mBan, also known as little Christmas or Women's Christmas, is a custom still celebrated by many on January 6th. On this day, the Christmas tree and other decorations were put away. Women of all ages, who traditionally did the bulk of the housework, took a well-earned day to socialise with women friends while the men took over the household chores. The camaraderie allowed grandmothers, grandchildren, daughters, aunts and sisters to share their stories.

Nowadays the custom is often used to celebrate women in new ways. On 5th January 2020, plays, poetry, letters and music will be performed by well-known women in the Abbey Theatre and broadcast on RTE 1 radio. You can host your own event and start a new tradition or you can join their party. <https://www.abbeytheatre.ie/whats-on/nollaig-na-mban/>

Nollaig na mBan is just one of the traditions and customs that form part of our shared history and identity. Such memories can be a comforting retreat from the often chaotic alternative during the hectic holiday season. Events that are inherited and known to all but owned by none, can anchor us and add to our sense of belonging and connection to a wider world. It may be difficult to find the time during Christmas, but there are a wealth of other ways to celebrate our past at any time of year.

The School's collection of folklore recorded in the 1930s offer a glimpse of everyday life as children were invited to record local traditions as part of the countrywide folklore collection. The result is now available online at www.duchas.ie or <https://www.librariesireland.ie/>

HABITS

Anyone can change any habit. Forming habits, more so than willpower alone, can help master new resolutions. Rather than trying to break a bad habit or correcting a habit with a resolution, try thinking in terms of creating a new habit and rewarding yourself for this.



To form good habits in 2020, it might be an idea to choose one positive thing to begin doing, or choose one thing you would like to change. Making the habit manageable, breaking it down into simple steps and taking them one at a time can be helpful. Remember it takes time to form new habits - be kind to yourself and stick with it!

CSEAS NEWS

In June 2019, the CSEAS welcomed two new members to our team - Vincent Dillon, Admin Support Officer and Fiona Mortell, Employee Assistance Officer. We wish them all the very best in the CSEAS.



CSEAS CONTACT DETAILS

Tel: 0761 000 030

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On-duty Employee Assistance Officer available:

Mon – Thurs: 9am to 5.45pm

Fri: 9am to 5.15pm (except bank/public holidays)