

## Support and self-care over the festive season while we're closed



As we know, the festive period can bring up mixed emotions for most of us. While the time can be joyful, it can also feel extremely overwhelming, exhausting and sometimes a bit lonely. As our practice will be closed from Friday 19<sup>th</sup> of December 2025 until Monday 5<sup>th</sup> of January 2026, we wanted to share some gentle reminders, grounding ideas and support options to help you care for yourself during this time.

The festive season comes with its own pressure and society has us believing that we must be happy and cheery throughout. However:

- It's okay if this season feels difficult or draining.
- You don't have to feel festive or grateful.
- Routines in daily living and in working life can shift and that can feel unsettling.
- Rest is allowed, even when others expect "togetherness".

You are not alone if this time of year feels hard. There is no "right" way to experience the festive season or going into the New Year.

## Grounding and Regulation Tools

Below you will find some simple and short tools you can return to throughout the festive season.

- **The 5-4-3-2-1- senses exercise**

This is where you look around and:

Name 5 distinct things you see (the picture hanging on the wall, the colour of the carpet, the leaves on the road).

4 things you can physically feel (the clothes on your skin, the wind blowing around you).

3 things you can hear that may be near or far (the TV on in another room, a car passing by, the birds tweeting).

2 things you can smell (or imagine two pleasant scents). (your perfume, or the smell of the ocean breeze).

1 thing you can taste (or take a sip/bite of something to notice the flavour) (a flavourful cup of tea or chewing gum).

This tool can be helpful if you feel anxious, stressed or panicky and it helps you to regain focus in overwhelming situations.

- **Feet on the floor**

This is when you press your feet down and notice the support beneath you. Noticing the sensation of contact and applying gentle pressure can help you feel connected to the ground. You can also engage your body by slowly increasing the pressure and noticing how it activates your thighs, buttocks and pelvic area. This tool

helps to shift focus from anxious thoughts to the present moment through physical awareness. You can also combine this with deep breathing exercises (examples below) by inhaling through your nose and exhaling through the mouth.

- **Breathing exercises**

These techniques help to control and guide your breath for relaxation, stress relief, and can help calm the nervous system.

- Box breathing is where you inhale for 4 seconds, exhale for 4 seconds and hold for 4 seconds This exercise can be used with visual cues such as tracing a rectangle that has been drawn on paper.
- Pursed lip breathing which is when you slowly exhale through pursed lips.
- The 4-7-8 breathing helps for relaxation and to aid in getting a better night's sleep, to do this you inhale through your nose for 4 seconds, hold your breath for 7 seconds and exhale completely through your mouth for 8 seconds (making a whoosh sound as the air exhales from your mouth).

# Rest, Burnout and Nervous System Care

The lead up to the festive period and when the time comes often involves so many more increased demands from those around you, expectations from family, friends and society as a whole and overwhelming stimulation. For many people, this leads to burnout or emotional exhaustion.

Things to remember that are important:

- Rest is not a reward. It is a basic need.
- You do not need to be productive, social or positive to be “celebrating the festive season right”.
- It is okay to reduce who you spend the time with.

Ways to support you through rest and recovery:

- Build intentional rest into your days, even in small amounts. 5-15 minutes has been shown to help rest the nervous system.
- Choose activities that feel low-pressure but familiar. (take a warm bath or shower, go for a walk in nature, watch a favourite film or listen to music, read a book, engage in a hobby or craft, write in a journal).
- Reduce stimulation where possible (this could be loud noises, tv and phone screens, social media and the news).
- Keep your routines simple and flexible where possible.

- Notice signs of burnout (irritability, fatigue, emotional numbness, withdrawal from social events are common signs) and respond to yourself with kindness, rather than self-criticism.

Rest supports your nervous system and helps prevent overwhelm and it does not mean that you are a failure or avoiding socialising with others.

## Over-Socialisation, Overwhelm and Boundaries

Social gatherings, family dynamics and expectations can feel particularly intense and overwhelming during the festive season.

This can be experienced by feeling drained after social contact with family, friends, neighbours and even work colleagues. Feeling on edge, increased people-pleasing or having the difficulty saying no can also be difficult at this time of year.

### Helpful boundaries

- You are allowed to say no.
- You are allowed to arrive late to an event or leave it earlier than it is due to finish.

- You do not owe anyone access to your time, no matter who they are to you. If you are not feeling comfortable around them or experiencing overwhelm you are allowed to leave the situation/environment.
- You are allowed to protect your wellbeing and that is inclusive of the emotional aspect, even if others do not understand.
- Take planned breaks (step outside for fresh air, sit in a quiet space, use headphones to listen to some music, practice breathing techniques).

Some simple phrases that you can use can include:

- “I’m going to step away for a moment as it is a bit too loud/warm/crowded in here”.
- “I won’t be staying long”.
- “I actually am in need of a quiet morning/afternoon/evening tonight, so I won’t be attending, thank you for the invitation though”.

## Emotional check-ins and Reflection

When we say emotional check-ins, we mean for you to begin to notice more of what you may need at certain moments in time which can help lead to reduced emotional overload.

It can be helpful to:

- Pause once or twice a day to notice how you are feeling, both physically and mentally.

- Begin to name emotions without judging them as they appear.
- To begin to track your energy levels, instead of only tracking your mood. This can help to see if there is a correlation between them and the activity you are trying to complete.

## Examples of journalling or reflection prompts

These prompts are not tasks for you to complete and you do not need to answer them or use any at all. Use what feels supportive and leave the rest.

- What feels most difficult right now?
- What feels supportive or grounding that you could try?
- What do I need less of this week?
- What would being gentle with myself look like today?
- What has helped me through tough times before?
- What feels manageable today?
- What feelings have I been pushing aside recently?
- What feels like “too much” right now?
- What would a rest day look like today, even if only in a small way?
- What types of interactions drain me the most, or have done recently?
- What boundaries would support me right now?
- What would I say to a friend in my situation?
- What part of me needs kindness right now?

- What matters to me right now?
- What helps me feel safer in my body?
- What am I hoping for in the New Year (without pressure)?
- Who can I reach out to?
- What do I need to do to get through the next hour?
- What would make this moment slightly easier?
- How much energy do I have today (low/medium/high)?
- What feels doable today?
- Are there signs of shutdown (feeling tired or withdrawn)?
- What would help me recover from overstimulation?
- Did I mask more than usual today?
- Are any emotions I am feeling confusing me?
- Do my feelings make sense given what is happening right now?
- What helps my body feel calmer?

When returning to therapy, these prompts can be helpful to bring back after the break:

- What has come up emotionally during the festive break?
- What patterns or themes have I noticed?
- What would I like support with when therapy resumes?
- What felt particularly challenging or significant?
- What felt like progress or care for myself?



## Returning to therapy

It is common for things to surface emotionally during breaks in therapy. Please remember that you do not need to resolve everything on your own and it is okay to “park” difficult thoughts or feelings until your sessions resume again.

## If you are struggling or in Crisis

While we may be closed for the festive period, support is still available. Reaching out for support is a sign of strength and you do not need to manage crisis situations alone.

### Please seek immediate help if:

- You are feeling unsafe.
- You are having thoughts of harming yourself or others.
- You feel unable to cope or are in crisis.
- Speak with a trusted person (friend, family member, GP, community support)

### Other available support options, include:

- Emergency services on 999/111
- Samaritans on 116 123
- SHOUT text Fife to 85258
- Breathing Space on 0800 838587
- CALM (Campaign Against Living Miserably) on 0800 585858 (5pm to midnight for men)

- Fife Women's Aid on 0808 802 5555 (for women)
- SANEline on 0300 304 7000 (4:30pm to 10:30pm)
- The Mix on 08080 808 4994 (for under 25's)
- Scotland's Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline on 0800 027 1234.
- Papyrus on 0800 068 41 41 (for young people).