

Words of Wellness

December 2023

December Calendar

December 3: Make a Gift Day: Personal gifts are the best, as they come from the heart! Take some time to make a gift for someone including something decorative or edible.

December 5: International Volunteer Day: Sponsored by the [United Nations](#), today is focused on celebrating the many contributions of volunteers around the world. Volunteering strengthens the social and emotional dimension increasing connection with others, and a sense of belonging and purpose.



December 15: International Tea Day: For many people, having a cup of tea symbolizes a bit of rest and making tea for someone else is a sign of caring and sharing.

December 21: Crossword Puzzle Day: Boost your intellectual wellness by doing a crossword puzzle today!

December 28: National Call a Friend Day: Connecting with others is important for your social, emotional, and even physical dimensions. Certain friends may also contribute to your spiritual or intellectual wellness!

You can schedule a phone call or text to see if your friend is free. Calling a friend may boost their sense of happiness and possibly prevent loneliness!

Winter Wellness Planner

Many people find the winter months to be extra stressful. Planning can make a positive difference. Year after year, readers ask us to share the Winter Wellness resource. We created the first Winter Wellness resource over fourteen years ago, when we offered a workshop focused on creating plans for wellness during the holiday and winter season. People loved the workshop and booklet we created, each year since, we have created and released and updated Winter Wellness Planner.

We continue to release the Winter Wellness Planner, a tool to help people individually or in small groups reflect on what you can do to manage stress and stay well during the winter and holiday season. The Planner allows you to create a list of activities to remember to do as part of a month-by-month plan for the winter, that can help you strengthen your wellness in the eight dimensions: emotional, financial, social, spiritual, occupational, physical, intellectual, and environmental.

You can use the Planner yourself, share with others or offer a group or virtual workshop or event on Zoom!

For ideas and support for using the Planner in a variety of ways, please reach out to us (pswarbrick@cspnj.org).

You do not need advance permission to use the Planner; we only ask that you use it as we developed it and be sure that the footer is legible if you share printed copies. Best wishes for a wonderful winter!!

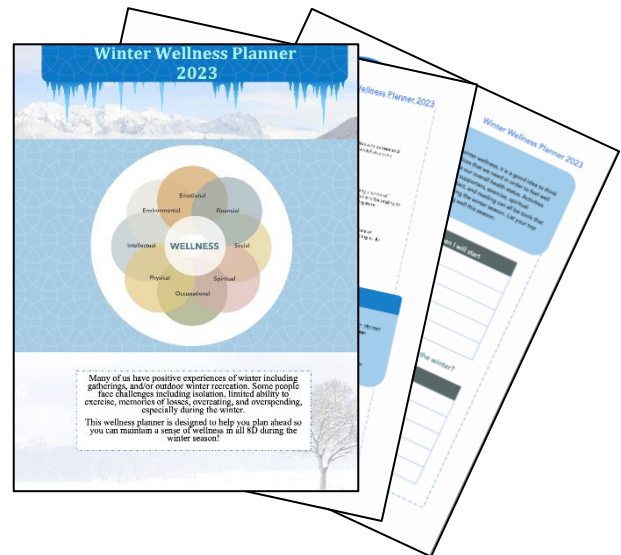
Staying Well in Winter

Winter and the holidays can be especially difficult for people with substance use and mental health challenges. Winter depression is more common among people who live in the northern areas of the US. Many people experience milder symptoms of the winter blues. Symptoms may include feeling tired and down, sleeping more, and craving starchy foods.

Winter blues has been linked to decreased exposure to light. Certain food choices and physical activity are key to health and wellness in any season but may be extra challenging in the winter. Winter cravings can override our good intentions to ‘eat healthy’. Many varieties of fresh fruit increase in price as local production decreases. Citrus fruit is a good seasonal option, as are many delicious varieties of winter squash. Outdoor exercise or physical activity is especially beneficial in the winter.

Get outside for a morning walk in the sun (if you can!). Movement can boost your mood regardless of where you do it, but the morning sun may help reduce those low-light blues. Bright indoor lights at night, including

the lights from your phone and TV, can interfere with your sleep cycle, but the morning sun promotes alertness and resets your clock.



Be sure to check out the 2023-2024 Winter Wellness Planner, available for download at [Winter-Wellness-2023-2024.pdf \(cspnj.org\)](https://www.cspnj.org/Winter-Wellness-2023-2024.pdf)

References and Resources

- This Month’s Banner Background is from: <https://pixabay.com/photos/winter-landscape-sunset-twilight-2995987/>

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