

DECEMBER 2020

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Happy Wednesday!

In today's newsletter you can check out these great articles:

- sharing the holidays with our pets
- 'lunch and learn' sessions - only two remaining in 2020!
- take time to care for yourself
- Christmas cookies are just the treat
- get active, stay healthy with exercise and meditation
- practical strategies for improving sleep

We encourage you to read today's articles and keep taking the time to identify ways you can support your ongoing self-care and wellbeing.

Stay well and have a great Wednesday.

Sharing the holidays with our pets

Sharing our lives with pets is good for our health. Not only do they make us healthier in normal times, in stressful times the benefit of a pandemic puppy (or cat), or other non-human companion, goes even further.

Research has shown that where there is a bond between human and animal. The presence of a non-human companion - especially a dog - decreases stress and creates physiological changes that make us feel better.

Christmas is a great time to have fun with the whole family and that includes our pets. With a house full of guests, it is important to remember this busy time can be very stressful for animals, and all those tempting decorations and foods can pose significant risks.

- **If you are hosting, exercise pets before your guests arrive.** This will help them de-stress and make them more likely to nap once the festivities are underway.
- **Create a safe, quiet place for your pet to relax.** Even the most social creatures need a break sometimes. It may also help to play music or leave the TV on to mask the chatter of visitors.
- **Don't give in to those puppy dog eyes.** Christmas food includes some of the most dangerous foods for animals to consume, so don't give in to those pleading looks!
- **Keep decorations out of reach.** A dog or cat may think the baubles look like toys to play with - but if a plastic or glass ornament breaks in their mouth, it could cause serious damage.
- **Clean up wrapping paper quickly.** If chewed, wrapping paper and ribbons can prove dangerous for a pet's intestines.
- **Give your pet a special treat.** You could create a treasure hunt of dry food or treats around the house or yard, [whip up some pupcakes](#), make them their favourite Kong, or take some time to play their favourite games with them.

Here are other resources to learn more about the important role pets play in our wellbeing, tips for keeping them safe and having a laugh with your pets.

- [When pets are family, the benefits extend into society](#) – from The Conversation
- [Six tips for keeping your pet safe this Christmas](#) – RSPCA blog
- Have a laugh by watching the '[Christmas Pets - Top 10 Countdown](#)' on YouTube (1 minute, 38 second video).



Lunch and learn sessions

We have two sessions remaining for 2020, so make sure you register now!

[Register here for any 'lunch and learn' session.](#) A Microsoft Teams link will be sent following registration.

Upcoming sessions include:

2 December 12:30pm - 1:15pm	Disability Awareness and the Disability and Learning Access Unit (DLAU)
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10 December

The good loaf – turning your sour culture into bread

12:00pm - 1:00pm

Brendan Carter, TAFE Teacher, Baking



Time to care for yourself

Self-care refers to activities undertaken with the intention of enhancing energy, restoring health and reducing stress – however, it is often the first thing that is sacrificed when life is busy.

Looking after yourself is one of the most important contributions you can make to your wellness, and to those you love. It's about being able to enjoy life and fulfil your potential. It is having the ability to cope with stresses and sadness, and it is about being connected to friends, family, community and culture.

The benefits of self-care include having increased resilience and reduces symptoms of mental health problems. Taking time for self-care is not always easy, but doing something small each day, week or month is a good start.

Ways of looking after yourself include:

- **Physically.** Be active and eat well, get enough sleep and rest, monitor and manage your stress in positive ways, limit the use of alcohol and other substances.
- **Relationships.** Nurture and maintain your personal relationships, connect with others to keep strong.
- **Time for you.** Make time for interests and things you enjoy, get involved and join a group with common interests, learn something new to help build you confidence.
- **Spiritually.** If you have spiritual beliefs, make time for regular spiritual practice, connect with others who share your philosophy.
- **Asking for help.** Reach out for support when you need it. Everyone needs support from time to time. Talking to a family member, a friend, your doctor or our [Employee](#)

There are many ways to do this and self-care is something that can be personalised for every individual. One simple way is to create a self-care plan. Get started on your plan by using the [Importance of self-care planning document](#).

<https://everymind.org.au/need-help/self-care>

We also recommend taking time to review the [Mental Health Information Guide](#) for more information and tips on how to create a self-care plan that works for you! You can also read more detail in the original [self-care article from Everymind](#).



Christmas cookies are just the treat

Christmas cookies are not just for Santa - who doesn't enjoy sitting down with a cup of Milo in one hand and enjoying a freshly baked cookie in the other! Whether you go for chocolate or you are more of a ginger snap fan, there's a Christmas cookie for everyone, and it's all about finding the right recipe.

Make your countdown to the Christmas break an indulgent one by trying one, or a few, of these easy and delicious cookie recipes below. Not only do you get to make (and possibly share) some delicious treats, but you get to use baking as some quality time for your self-care or spending it helping the kids learning something new.

Try this selection of Christmas cookie recipes...and enjoy!

- [Choc mint brownie cookies](#)
- [Vegan chocolate chip cookies](#)
- [Shortbread trees](#)

- [Sweet and salty zucchini bread cookies](#)
- [Pistachio and pink peppercorn shortbread](#)



Get active, stay healthy

Have you planned an exercise or mindfulness session this week?

Join these sessions by using the Zoom links provided below or by emailing us at hr@federation.edu.au.

- [Mondays - 4:45pm - **Meditation** \(join here\)](#)
- [Tuesdays - 9:30am - **Meditation** \(join here\)](#)
- [Thursdays - 9:15am - **Meditation** \(join here\)](#)
- [Thursdays - 12:15pm - **Retro aerobics and stretch** \(join here\)](#)

UniSports group fitness classes continue as normal on Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 12:00pm. [Check out the group fitness page for further details.](#)

If you have any pre-existing conditions or are new to exercising, please follow the advice of your health professional. It is vital that we prioritise the health and safety of ourselves, family, friends and the community.



Practical strategies for improving sleep

When focusing on our wellbeing, sleep should be a priority. Since the pandemic started, people are reporting having more vivid dreams and disturbed sleeping patterns. [In this ABC Media podcast \(3:24 minutes\)](#) we learn that the key is to tell our dreaming mind, as we fall asleep, what type of dream we would like to have.

Even prior to the pandemic, two thirds of adults in developed countries were getting insufficient sleep and when we are sleep deprived, there is enormous personal cost in terms of physical, emotional and mental wellbeing.

Check out these simple tips to improve your sleep:

- **Stick to a sleep schedule** - aim to go to bed at the same time each night and sleep for no more than eight hours. Consistency will reinforce your body's sleep-wake cycle.
- **Watch what you eat and drink** - avoid heavy or large meals within a couple of hours before bedtime. Similarly, nicotine, alcohol, and caffeine can each impair your ability to fall asleep or reduce the quality of your sleep.
- **Be physically active** - regular physical activity, particularly outdoors and preferably in the morning or before the evening meal, can promote better sleep.
- **Things to avoid close to bedtime** - activities that are stimulating such as moderate exercise, computer games, television, movies, having important discussions, using social media and responding to emails and text messages should be avoided in the hour before bed.

[For more fascinating information about sleep, watch 'a walk through stages of sleep'](#) – an interesting TedTalk by Matt Walker, Professor of Neuroscience and Psychology at the University of California.



Quick Links

[COVID-19 support for staff](#)

[Mental health and wellbeing - information guide](#)

[Health and wellbeing resources](#)

