



# The Kamloops Self Advocate NEWSLETTER



**DECEMBER 2024**

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We're so excited to bring you our special holiday edition. This month, it's all about having fun and staying healthy! The holidays are often a joyful time, but they can also be a little tricky for some people. This issue is packed with helpful ideas to make the holidays bright for everyone.

Let's start with something fun—holiday entertainment! Do you love watching Christmas movies? If so, you should check out the article about a fun podcast called *Christmas Movies Actually*. The hosts review all kinds of Christmas movies, telling you what they love and what they don't like so much. Some movies are great, while others... well, not so much! But this podcast will definitely make you smile and get you in the holiday mood.

You might be reaching for some holiday treats while you enjoy those movies, right? Cookies, candies, and special dinners are everywhere! It's important to enjoy these treats while also taking care of your body. In this issue, we share some easy tips to help you eat healthy and still enjoy the delicious foods of the season. There's even a recipe for a special holiday drink: allergy-friendly eggnog! Everyone can sip on this festive drink and feel included in the fun! Plus, we have tips on how to handle food allergies at big family dinners, so everyone can feel safe and enjoy their meals.

Along with the fun, there can also be some stress. If you're dealing with mental health challenges, we have information on how to stay connected. You are not alone with your challenges. There is always hope. If you ever feel down or overwhelmed, remember that there's help out there.

Grab a warm blanket, maybe a cup of that yummy egg-free eggnog, and dive into our December issue. We have lots of articles, interviews, and ideas that will keep you warm, entertained, and feeling good this holiday season. Whether it's through fun podcasts, healthy recipes, or exciting community events, we hope you find joy and comfort in this special time of year.

Let's all show kindness and compassion to everyone this holiday season. It's a time to be inclusive and to make sure everyone feels loved and cared for. We hope this issue brings you some holiday cheer and helpful advice for a wonderful season.

Happy Holidays from all of us at The Kamloops Self Advocate Newsletter!



**Special thanks to The  
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continued  
support of the Kamloops  
Self-Advocate Newsletter.**

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Celebrating Disability Awareness, success stories and inclusion for all! Written by people with Diverse Abilities **Do you have a story idea or an event you think would be good for our readers? Contact us at:**

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113-540 Seymour St., Kamloops, BC V2C 2G9 Office phone: 250-828-1344.

We always look for writers and people to interview.

**Please subscribe! Be sure to check out our online newsletter for bonus stories!**

KSA Facebook page: **The Kamloops Self Advocate Newsletter**

KSA website: [ksanews.ca](http://ksanews.ca)



The KSA has created a program to recognize and promote local businesses that are accessible and supportive of all members of the community. The businesses listed here are friendly, accessible, and great to deal with.

### **Ability Friendly Accessible Business Program**

- Horizon Dental Clinic**
- 5 Bean Brewbar & Café**
- All Around Gamerz**
- The Vic Downtown**
- Kamloops Film society**
- People in Motion**
- New Horizons Professional Support Services Inc.**
- Our Footprints Eco Store**
- Kamloops Art Party**

### **Krystian's Corner**

Welcome to the December edition of *The Kamloops Self Advocate* newsletter! This month is all about staying healthy and enjoying holiday fun. Whether you're celebrating or just trying to stay balanced, we have great tips and ideas to help.

Do you ever dream about going on a special **holiday trip**? Well, we've got an exciting article about celebrating the holidays at Disney World! Imagine walking through Disney with Christmas lights all around you. Your favorite Disney characters are wearing their Christmas outfits, and there are magical shows everywhere. It's a dream vacation for anyone who loves Disney, and we'll tell you all about what makes it so special during the holidays.

For some more holiday fun, if you live in Kamloops, you can go see the *Stars on Ice* tour at the Sandman Centre. This is a show where ice skaters perform amazing tricks and dances on ice! It's a great way to get into the holiday spirit and enjoy something fun indoors.

But the holidays aren't always easy for everyone. Some people feel lonely. A singer-songwriter has a song called "What Do the Lonely Do at Christmas" that talks about this. If you feel lonely, remember that you're not alone. Many people feel this way, and there are ways to feel better.

Taking care of your mental health is really important during the holidays. If you ever feel overwhelmed, you can call the 988 Suicide and Crisis Helpline in Canada. This number is for anyone who needs extra support. It's okay to ask for help!

We also talked to Chantelle MacInnis, a mental health counselor from Fusion Health Clinic in Kamloops. She gave some great advice about handling holiday stress. Chantelle says it's okay to say "no" if you're feeling too busy. Taking care of yourself comes first, so make sure you take breaks and relax when you need to.

Besides mental health, eating healthy during the holidays is also important. You can still enjoy treats but try to balance them with fruits and veggies to keep your energy up.

For some, the holidays bring the winter blues or holiday depression. Some people even get Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), which happens when there's less sunlight. Simple things like going outside, getting fresh air, or staying active can help a lot.

If you ever feel down, remember that you can call the 988 helpline for support. You don't have to go through it alone.

This month's newsletter is also raising awareness about food allergies and disabilities. It's important to make sure everyone can enjoy the holidays safely and feel included.

I hope you enjoy this month's newsletter. Have a happy and healthy holiday season!





## Out of My Mind

The Kamloops Self Advocate Newsletter and Ability Online are hosting a virtual movie night on Friday, December 13th. We'll be showcasing *Out of My Mind*, a powerful film about disability representation based on the book of the same name by Sharon M. Draper. This drama tells the story of Melody Brooks, a sixth grader with cerebral palsy. Melody has a quick wit and sharp mind, but because she is non-verbal and uses a wheelchair, she isn't given the same opportunities as her classmates. A young educator recognizes Melody's untapped potential, and as she begins to participate in mainstream education, Melody shows that what she has to say is more important than how she says it. Phoebe Rae Taylor, an actor who also lives with cerebral palsy and uses a wheelchair, stars as Melody. This new Disney Plus movie, released in November 2024, highlights disability representation and helps reduce stigma and discrimination.

Please email [michelle@abilityonline.org](mailto:michelle@abilityonline.org) for the link, and she will send it to you on the morning of the event.

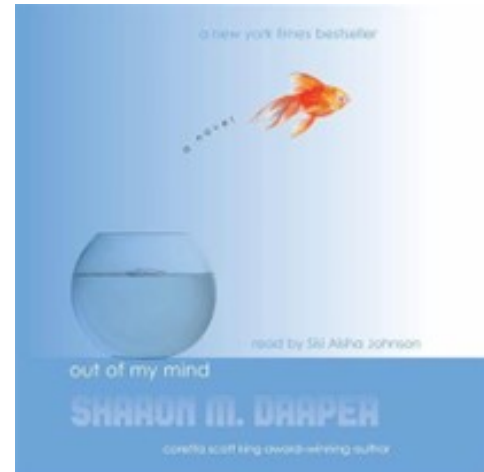
The movie will begin at 4 pm BC Time [7 pm EST].

Come one, come all to watch a film that will inspire, uplift, and may bring you happy tears this holiday season!

For more information go here

<https://ondisneyplus.disney.com/movie/out-of-my-mind>

<https://www.amazon.com/Out-My-Mind-Sharon-Draper/dp/1416971718>



## Holiday Fun

If you are looking for some fun activities and entertainment for the holidays, go to the Tourism Kamloops web-site. They've got lots of great information:

<https://www.tourismkamloops.com/events/>




Enhancing Each Day  
for Each Individual



## Holiday Movie Quotes

Dr. Seuss' *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*: "No one should be alone on Christmas."

*Home Alone 2: Lost in New York*: "You can mess with a lot of things. But you can't mess with kids on Christmas."

*A Charlie Brown Christmas*: "Isn't there anyone who knows what Christmas is all about?"

*The Santa Clause*: "Just because you can't see something, doesn't mean it doesn't exist."

*Home Alone*: "This is Christmas. The season of perpetual hope."




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## Kindness and Compassion Interview With Nan Stevens

By Lisa Coriale

As self advocates, we teach those around us how to look at life from our perspective. Kindness and compassion change our interactions from strained, stressful, unpleasant, and hurtful to easy, peaceful, joyful, and healthy. There are many simple ways to express and

offer kindness and compassion each day. This feature shows us how different individuals from a variety of backgrounds use kindness and compassion to improve their daily lives and the lives of those around them.

### **Please tell me about yourself.**

I am a mother of a 21-year-old man who lives with an intellectual disability. Westin needs support with all aspects of daily living and will need assistance for his entire life.

### **What do you do for a living?**

I was a teacher and professor in my career. I am retired, yet I enjoy occasional contracts and I offer my time for service work in the community.

### **What does kindness and compassion mean to you?**

For me, kindness and compassion mean thinking of others before oneself. It means being aware of those around me and imagining their pain, their struggles, and their journeys.

### **Why is it important to show kindness and compassion to others?**

Without kindness and compassion in this world, I am not sure we would survive as a species. It is the human condition to belong, to need love, and to connect with others. Kindness and compassion are foundational to meeting human needs.

### **How do you show kindness and compassion to others?**

I feel a great deal of empathy for homeless people. I like to purchase food for folks I see on the street. It is a small gesture, yet food is a way of showing that I care. Often sitting outside of grocery stores, I will ask homeless people what they like to eat and go and purchase it. They are grateful to receive food –it is one aspect of helping them to survive. Once I came out of the grocery store with a bag full of food for a young man –he had left the spot he was at...maybe he did not trust that I would do what I said I was going to do.

### **How can people show compassion when they are in community?**

People can show compassion in any way they want – a smile is a gesture that does not cost anything. Anyone can smile. Also, a hello to acknowledge another person is a small yet meaningful thing to do.

### **What are some ways people can show kindness and compassion to people with diverse abilities?**

Acknowledgment is the key for me as a mother of a person with diverse abilities. The general public is still not there yet - My son is very social and wants to connect with people. On many occasions, Westin has initiated saying hello or shaking someone's hand. Many people do respond and say hello and shake Westin's hand, yet there are still people who are afraid and uncomfortable with his "differences". They do not wish to engage and look away or walk away, uncomfortably. I find young people have no trouble at all engaging – I think it may have to do with the Full Inclusion Movement in the last 20 years where kids with diverse abilities attended regular schools. These adults of the next generation were alongside students with diverse abilities in their classrooms and schools. It is the older generation that did not have that experience who are unsure. People with diverse abilities were segregated and living in institutions during their decades of growing up.

### **Being kind to ourselves improves our mental health. In what ways are you kind to yourself?**

Mental health is very important to me, especially since I was the primary caregiver for my dependent son for over 20 years. That took a toll on me. I take care of myself by taking time alone to go to yoga, meditate, go swimming, or for a walk in nature. I enjoy spending time with friends who know me well. I enjoy cooking, reading, and hanging out with my dog. I try to balance my self-care needs between social and private time.

### **People sometimes have negative views and/or attitudes towards people with diverse abilities. What do you do, or can you do, to increase kindness and compassion for those who are diversely abled?**

I model respect for those with diverse abilities by treating them with respect and kindness -the way I would treat anyone. I can model behaviors and an attitude of inclusion, and I hope that others can see how I am in community. I take the opportunity to introduce Westin to people when he approaches them, and I have a few good lines that help ease the greeting. Fear is a tricky barrier to get past – each person is on their own journey to learn and accept people with diverse abilities. I find that one's fear can keep one "stuck" in old belief systems and judgments. It takes time and perhaps a positive interaction with people with diverse abilities for individuals to change their thinking. If I can provide that positive experience through an introduction to my son, then maybe I can make a difference. Westin, and all people with diverse abilities, are teachers for others to learn from.

# Skate into the Holidays with Stars on Ice!

By Krystian

*Get ready to enjoy some holiday magic on ice! The Stars on Ice Tour is bringing a special holiday show to Kamloops at the Sandman Centre on December 13th at 7 pm. The show will be filled with amazing figure skaters, bright costumes, and holiday cheer, perfect for fans of all ages.*

*We got to talk to Kaetlyn Osmond, a champion skater, and Byron Allen, the producer of Stars on Ice, about how they get ready for the show and what they love most about the holidays. They share some of their favorite holiday traditions and what makes this show so magical. If you love figure skating or just want to feel the joy of the season, this is a show you won't want to miss!*

## Meet Kaetlyn

**Who are you?** I am a Canadian figure skater that is a 3x Canadian Champion, 3x Olympic medalist, and the 2018 World Champion.

**How do you prepare for a tour like Stars on Ice, especially during the holiday season?** I've been training by myself between my regular jobs of being a figure skating coach, figure skating analyst, and beginner public speaker, as well as a full-time student at the University of Alberta, studying media and creative writing.

I am looking forward to joining the rest of the cast at the end of November, to learn and rehearse for the group aspects of the show.

**Do you have a favorite routine or performance from this tour?** We do two types of numbers during the show. The entire cast skates together in group numbers, which are always fan favorites. However, we don't learn group numbers until the week of the first show. I will also perform two solo routines, that are favorites of mine. However, you'll have to come to the show to see what they are as I want all of the fans to be surprised!

**How do you balance your holiday traditions with the busy tour schedule?** This year, I'll try to get most of my decorations up before I leave for tour, and while I am away my partner will be going out to find our Christmas tree. The benefit of my holiday traditions, is that they typically start on December 23rd, the day I get to be home.

**How do you celebrate the Christmas season?** I celebrate with my friends and family. December 23rd is spent with friends and family at a massive gathering, filled with so many Christmas treats, music, and fun games. The 24th is spent with my family, usually at my house, where I'll make homemade pizza and just hang out. And then Christmas morning, I am still the kid on Christmas that enjoys waking up at 5:00am where I am promptly told to go back to sleep. Then I spend Christmas morning quietly sipping coffee and/or hot chocolate in front of the fireplace and Christmas tree and spent the afternoon with my family eating delicious Christmas dinner. The celebrations are not over there, Boxing Day is another gathering of watching the World Junior Hockey Championships with friends and family, no matter the time of day that it is scheduled for.

**What are your goals for the upcoming skating season or future tours?** Not really sure what my goals are. This is my first tour back in a few years and hope all goes well. I have a few small shows planned in the new year, as well as seminars, and coaching, and getting through my schooling. We will see where that goes.

## Meet Byron

**What goes into planning and organizing a tour like this, especially during the holidays?** Most of the work is done long before the holidays, so that when we get out on the road, we're ready to go.

**How do you choose which skaters will participate in the holiday tour?** We try to choose skaters who will entertain the audience and work well together in a group. Their popularity and on-ice accomplishments certainly factor in to who we know our audience will want to see.

**What special activities or interactions do you have planned for the audience during the holiday tour?** We want our fans to be surprised, so they'll have to come to the show to find out!

**Can you share any behind-the-scenes stories or challenges from this year's tour?** It's always a challenge to come up with a theme which will grab the attention of the audience and maintain it through the evening – but we're confident that Kaitlyn Weaver, who not only skates in the show, but is also the choreographer, will do so!

**Are there any exciting plans or changes for future Stars on Ice tours?** Our next Stars on Ice Canadian tour will take place in the Spring of 2025. Stay tuned for an announcement soon!



Continued on next page



## Stars on Ice, continued

**What else would you like to add? How can people find you online?** The special holiday edition of Stars on Ice, featuring some of the most accomplished figure skaters in the world, is set to visit Kamloops on Friday, December 13 for a 7:00 PM performance at the Sandman Centre.

Tickets for Stars on Ice are on sale now. Limited on-ice seating is available. Secure your tickets and experience the magic of Stars on Ice this holiday season. Tickets start at \$25 (not including Facility Fee and Service Charges) and are available via [www.starsonice.ca](http://www.starsonice.ca) and [ticketmaster.ca](http://ticketmaster.ca). Visit [www.starsonice.ca](http://www.starsonice.ca) to unwrap your show tickets and find out more about the tour.

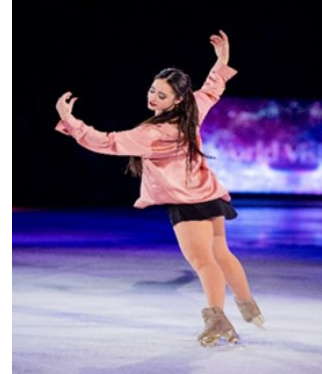


Photo Credit: Danielle Earl

## Cassie's Charity Drive

My name is Cassie McNutt, I am the founder of Cassie's Charity Drive. I am 17 years old and a first-year university student who began my charity in 2019 when I was just 12 years old.

Over the years, my charity has supported various nonprofits in Kamloops, but for the past three years, we've focused on the Kamloops Hospice Association. This Christmas marks our fourth year raising funds for them. Our goal this year is to raise as many funds as possible to support general operating costs for the Hospice. The Hospice relies heavily on community support and donations, needing to raise 1.2 million dollars a year to keep their doors open as they are 1 of 3 stand alone Hospices in all of BC. To support this goal, we're doing things a bit differently by hosting five smaller 50/50 draws starting on November 14th, giving five lucky winners a chance to win. All information regarding the 50/50s and the links once they are up and running will be posted on my Facebook page 'Cassie's Charity Drive'. And of course, our popular Christmas lights display will be open for the community to enjoy at 5215 Dallas Drive throughout December.

I hope you'll stop by, share in the Christmas spirit, and help us support the Kamloops Hospice Association!



## No Egg Egnog

Taken from <https://kidswithfoodallergies.org/recipes/no-egg-eggnog/>

Recipe Created By: Tammie

### Ingredients

- 8 cups skim milk
- 1 3 oz pkg French Vanilla instant pudding
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 2 tsp vanilla
- 1/2 tsp nutmeg



### Directions

In large mixing bowl, mix the pudding with one cup of the milk. When pudding is formed, add in the remaining ingredients and mix very well.

Chill prior to serving, add garnishes as desired.

### NOTES

Substitutions

Milk and Soy Substitutions: Alternative dairy-free milk beverages and products will work in most recipes. Find out more about [milk substitutions](#) and [soy substitutions](#).

## Holiday Jokes

Why did the Christmas turkey form a band? It had the drumsticks!

What do snowmen eat for breakfast on Christmas morning? Ice krispies!



What do gingerbread men have on their bed? Cookie sheets!

Why did the Kwanzaa celebration break up early? It ran out of unity candles!

Why was the Kwanzaa feast so noisy? Everyone was drumming up some fun!

Which hand is best to light the menorah with? Neither, it's best to light it with a candle.

What did the candles say when the menorah complained about getting too hot? "Whoa, a talking menorah."



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## **Mental Health during the Holidays with Chantelle**

By Krystian

### ***Trigger Warning: Mental Health Discussion***

*This article contains sensitive content related to mental health, including discussions of suicide prevention. If you find these topics emotionally challenging, please be mindful while reading.*

*If you are struggling this holiday season, know that you are not alone. Support is available. Reach out to a crisis line like 988 for immediate help or call 911 in an emergency. Your mental health matters.*

This month, we had the pleasure of interviewing Chantelle MacInnis, a mental health counsellor from Fusion Health Clinic in Kamloops, who shares valuable insights on maintaining mental wellness during the holidays. <https://www.fusionhealthclinic.ca/about/>  
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/therapists/chantelle-macinnis-kamloops-bc/1358986>

### **What are common mental health challenges people face during the holidays?**

**Stress and burnout** – The holidays come with expectations from others and the wider culture around what to do, how to behave, and how to celebrate. The social/familial obligations increase, as do our to-do lists, and it can be difficult to juggle it all.

**Loneliness and sadness** – Our societal greeting card of what the holidays look like is sadly, not many people’s reality. Instead, many of us do not have close relationships with family or family at all to attend holidays with. This can bring up feelings of grief and loneliness.

### **How can people set healthy boundaries with family and friends during the holidays?**

First, know that setting boundaries with family members and friends is not easy. We have years of relational patterns in place that other people may not want to change. Take some time to consider what you can realistically commit to. For example, what can you do that won’t drain you or create a resentment. If you sense that others won’t approve of your decision, find ways to manage your discomfort with their disapproval. Having a support person to talk to, taking time for self-care, and validating your need to create that boundary can help.

### **What are some effective ways to cope with feelings of loneliness or grief during this time?**

Share your feelings with a supportive person. Loneliness and grief are such isolative experiences that sharing about them can help us feel less alone. Pick someone who you know can hold space for your feelings without judgment.

Find ways to make the holiday season your own, such as creating new rituals and celebrations that work for you.

Find a support group near you or online. Grief groups can be helpful resources to share and hear others’ experiences.

### **What are some signs that someone might need professional help during the holidays and crisis helplines?**

If you find that over a consistent period of time, you are not enjoying activities that you normally enjoy, feel a persistent sense of sadness, and want to isolate yourself from others, I suggest reaching out for professional help.

### **How can we support loved ones who might be struggling with their mental health or if they are grieving during the holidays?**

Tell them that you are there to listen if they want someone to talk to. If they choose to share with you, listen and empathize with their experience. Avoid giving advice or trying to problem solve (unless that is what they are seeking).

Let them know that you are here for them. You don’t have to know what to say to be helpful. For many people, knowing that someone is there for them and accepts them just as they are, is enough.

### **What are the signs and symptoms of holiday depression and winter blues and how can we tell the difference between normal holiday stress and more serious depression?**

Stress is normally brought on by a specific event or situation. When we are stressed, we may feel an increase in anxiety or irritability, a decrease in concentration and focus, the desire to “get things done”, with an inability to relax. Physical symptoms may also present themselves, such as an increased heart rate and tension in the shoulders/face. Once the stressor is resolved, then the stress will decrease.

While depression can be brought on by a situation or event, it can also present itself without a clear precipitating trigger. Symptoms include sadness, lack of joy or enjoyment in most things, lack of energy, and changes in sleep and eating patterns. These symptoms can be experienced for some time, and individuals with serious depression may experience suicidal thoughts. Please reach out for help if your symptoms persist or if you experience thoughts of suicide.

**Continued on next page**

## **Mental Health during the Holidays, continued**

### **What are the key differences between winter blues and seasonal affective disorder (SAD)?**

Winter blues may be characterized by feelings of sadness and low mood that come and go during the winter months.

SAD is a more serious condition with symptoms similar to those who experience depression, including possible suicidal ideation. SAD is normally experienced in the fall and winter months.

The difference between the two is SAD is associated with persistent sadness and impact to overall functioning in one or more areas of one's life (occupational, relational). While winter blues may impact our mood, we are still able to engage in life's activities and responsibilities.

### **Are there specific therapies or treatments that are effective for managing winter blues?**

Lifestyle interventions, such as movement (walking, yoga), being in nature, and social support are all helpful for managing winter blues.

If you think that professional help is warranted, cognitive-behavioural therapy and mindfulness based treatments are two effective models for the treatment of winter blues and depression.

### **How can people create a support system to help me through the holiday season?**

First, start with the people already in your life. Is there someone who you feel comfortable sharing your need for support? Your support system doesn't have to be big; one or two people will do. Quality over quantity.

Or perhaps you could reach out to those who you know could use some support. Being helpful can aid to increase our sense of connection and belonging.

### **What are some effective ways to reduce the stigma around discussing suicide?**

Unfortunately, stigma on the topic of suicide still exists among individuals, institutions, and the wider culture. Education is one way to battle stigma. Information increases understanding.

### **What are the best crisis helplines to contact during a mental health emergency?**

Emergency Medical Services: 911

The Crisis Centre (Suicide Hotline): 988.

Mental Health Support Line: 310-6789 (no area code)

### **What are the most common warning signs of suicidal thoughts during the holidays?**

If an individual is showing a change in their behaviour, emotionality or temperament. If they are isolating more often or engaging in self-harm, or other risky behaviours. If they talk of death or dying and are experiencing hopelessness.

**How can we encourage someone who is grieving to participate in holiday activities?** Rather than encourage an individual who is grieving to participate in holiday activities, meet them where they are at in terms of their capacity to engage in social interactions. While it's true that limiting social engagement can be detrimental to one's mental health, we also want to allow people the space to 'be' in their grief. Showing others that we are ok with where they are at communicates to others that they are accepted in their pain, thereby reducing their chances of feeling alone.

### **What are some strategies for managing a mental health emergency until professional help arrives?**

Call a support person (friend, peer support group member) and ask them to stay on the phone with you until help arrives. It may be helpful to have this agreement in place with your support person beforehand. Reaching out for help is not easy, but knowing the other person has agreed to support you in an emergency may make reaching out easier.

### **Are there specific activities or routines that can help improve mood during the holiday season?**

The most important thing is to honour and accept our experience. If we are hard on ourselves while feeling low, it exacerbates our struggles. There is likely a very valid reason for our feelings, and when felt, they will pass. It just may take some time. Be gentle and kind to yourself.

### **What are some meaningful ways to honor and remember lost loved ones during holiday gatherings?**

Rituals and ceremonies are meaningful ways to honour lost loved ones. Perhaps its lighting a candle, writing a letter, or saying a prayer. What's important is that the ritual feels meaningful to you.

### **What else would you like to add? How can people find you online?**

I recognize that reaching out for help is not easy. It takes tremendous courage. Much of the information that I provide suggests having safe and supportive connections. I recognize that getting close enough to feel connected to others can be difficult for many people. If this is you, I want you to know that you are not alone. Start with one person and reach out in small doses if that works best. There is hope and grieving does pass.

I can be reached at Fusion Health Clinic, <https://www.fusionhealthclinic.ca/>

By phone 778-470-0089 or via email [macinnischantelle@gmail.com](mailto:macinnischantelle@gmail.com).





*We reached out to JM Nutrition to get some tips on healthy eating during the holidays.*

*A lot of us struggle during a season when it is easy to overeat or to eat things that aren't always healthy. A registered dietitian, Nataly Georgieva, at JM Nutrition took the time to give some really great suggestions to help you get through the festive season.*

## **How can people eat healthy at Christmas and avoid overeating at holiday parties?**

Keeping the balanced plate in mind can help to ensure that you are meeting your macro and micronutrient needs, whereby half the plate includes vegetables, a quarter includes protein, the last quarter includes carbohydrates, and then fats are dispersed throughout. To avoid overeating, make sure that you continue to eat regularly on the day of the holiday party and avoid going too long without eating. While it may be common for folks to purposely restrict themselves during the day in anticipation of the event, it sets up the perfect scenario for overeating at the event itself due to ravenous hunger and overall inadequate intake.

## **How can people enjoy their favourite holiday treats without overindulging?**

First, we want to make sure that holiday treats are not being used as a replacement to a meal, in which case overconsumption is much more likely. By satisfying our physical hunger first using the balanced plate model, we can then include treats to satisfy any cravings. Incorporating aspects of mindful eating can also help us to be more aware of our hunger and fullness cues; that is, taking our time while eating, eating without distractions (if possible), and really tuning in to all 5 of our senses: sight, smell, taste, touch, and hearing. Keep in mind that overindulging is also more likely to occur if we impose food rules on ourselves, as it can make the restricted food much more desirable.

## **What are some common challenges people face when trying to eat healthy during the Christmas season?**

Common challenges include being in an uncontrollable food environment, increased accessibility to foods that are otherwise not a regular part of a person's diet, and for some, the urge to finish one's plate despite already feeling full.

## **Are there any specific nutrients or foods that people should focus on during the winter holidays?**

Protein. Oftentimes, seasonal holiday food tends to be lacking in protein and high in carbohydrates. Having adequate protein helps us to feel satiated for a longer period of time and reduces the chances of experiencing cravings.

## **How can someone manage portion control at holiday gatherings?**

If possible, eating from a smaller plate can help reduce portion sizes, as it is not uncommon for folks to overfill their plate and then feel the need to finish their plate, leading to overeating. As the saying goes, "Our eyes are bigger than our stomach." Consider intentionally putting less on your plate while knowing that, should you need another serving, there is more food available.

## **What are some strategies for dealing with food-related peer pressure during Christmas parties?**

A phrase I always share with my clients is "Eyes on your own plate," which turns the focus inwards on ourselves, while understanding that each individual is probably doing the best they know. Understanding how to set boundaries can also be helpful in ensuring that your own needs are not being sacrificed for the sake of pleasing others. For example, knowing when to say no or when to step away from uncomfortable situations.

## **Can you suggest some healthy alternatives to traditional Christmas dishes?**

[Vegan mashed potatoes recipe](#)

[Stuffing recipe](#)

[Low-carb pumpkin pie recipe](#)

[Healthier gingerbread cookies recipe](#)

## **How important is it to stay hydrated during the holiday season, and what are some ways to ensure adequate water intake?**

While staying hydrated is important year-round, it is especially important during the holidays, as that is a common time of year to drink alcohol. If choosing to drink alcoholic beverages, consider having a glass of water after each drink to support your hydration. If you are not a fan of plain water, you can have herbal tea, carbonated water, or plain water with flavourings added (e.g. berries, citrus, mint); all of which count towards water consumption.

**What are some tips for avoiding the post-holiday weight gain?** Understanding that post-holiday weight gain is a very common occurrence, and weight can naturally stabilize when a person returns to their usual patterns of eating. While it may feel tempting to immediately go on a diet, being too restrictive can backfire and ultimately lead to further weight gain. The most ideal thing a person can do is listen to their body's hunger and fullness cues to guide their decision making around food, while choosing food that nourishes and satiates their body most often, without completely eliminating craved foods.

**Continued on next page**

## Healthy Eating, continued

### Can you recommend any healthy snacks for holiday travel or busy days?

For folks in need of a convenient snack, protein bars are a great go-to! They can be stored at room temperature and kept in your bag, car, office desk, etc. Some brands I often recommend include: Simply Protein bar, KIND bar, RX bar.

### Can you share any tips for making holiday recipes more accessible for people with sensory sensitivities?

Given that sensory sensitivities are so uniquely individual, providing foods with a range of textures, tastes, temperatures, colours, smells, and appearances, may help ensure there are options available for everyone. For example, some folks prefer mild, bland tasting food, while others prefer their food heavily seasoned. Many folks with sensory sensitivities prefer food that is not slimy or mushy, and often prefer pre-packaged foods.

### What challenges do people with disabilities face when it comes to preparing and enjoying holiday meals?

Folks with disabilities may face an assortment of challenges anywhere throughout the cooking / baking process, from chopping, peeling, measuring, mixing, etc. It may take longer to prepare the food, as well as to clean up afterwards. While cooking / baking can be a very enjoyable experience for some, all of these challenges may add extra stress and lead to a less enjoyable experience.

### How can someone manage the stress and anxiety associated with food allergies during the festive season?

Being prepared by bringing your own food just in case there are no options available that are allergen-free, or if there is no guarantee that the food provided is allergen-free.

For more information, go to: <https://www.julienutrition.com/>

### JM Nutrition Suggestions for Holiday Eating with Food Allergies

#### How can people safely navigate holiday meals when they have food allergies?

The most common food allergens include dairy, eggs, wheat, and nuts; all of which are commonly used in baked goods. Dairy is also commonly used in mashed potatoes.

If the food is store-bought (e.g. pre-packaged cookies), the safest thing to do is look at the ingredients list to ensure it does contain food allergens. For homemade food, be sure to ask about the ingredients, though keep in mind that there may still be a risk of cross-contamination depending on how the food was handled. If you are still unsure, avoid the food just to be safe and/or consider bringing your own food.

#### What steps can hosts take to accommodate guests with food allergies during holiday events?

Hosts can ask guests to disclose any food allergies ahead of time, as well as the severity of the allergy. Offering food that is free from the top 8 allergens (milk, eggs, fish, crustaceans, peanuts, tree nuts, wheat, and soy) can help to ensure it is accessible for as many people as possible. Alternatively, allergen-free versions of foods can be served at the event alongside the original foods, so long as there is no cross-contamination and depending on the severity of the allergy.

#### Can you suggest some allergen-free alternatives for popular Christmas recipes?

For folks following a dairy-free diet, non-dairy milks (e.g. almond, coconut, oat, soy, cashew) and vegan butter can be used instead of dairy in various popular Christmas recipes, such as mashed potatoes, cookies, or pie.

If following a gluten-free diet, there is gluten-free flour available, such as almond flour, coconut flour, and oat flour, which can be used instead of wheat flour. Keep in mind that changing the flour will most likely alter the texture if used in baked goods.

Lastly, eggs can be substituted for flax eggs.

## JM NUTRITION

### JM Nutrition Tips for Holiday Eating on A Budget

#### How can people make the most of food assistance programs to prepare healthy holiday meals?

Food assistance programs typically provide dry food or canned goods, which have a longer shelf life (e.g. rice, pasta, dried beans or lentils, canned vegetables or beans). These foods can certainly be incorporated as part of a healthy meal.

#### How can families on a tight budget plan nutritious holiday meals?

1. Buying in bulk, if possible, especially for foods that have a longer shelf life (e.g. rice, oats, beans, pasta, lentils).
2. Purchasing generic products instead of their brand name counterpart.
3. Buying items when they are on sale, and comparing prices with other grocery stores. Using apps like Flipp allow you to compare prices with other grocery stores and price-match certain items.
4. Choosing produce that is in-season tends to be cheaper, and frozen or canned fruits or vegetables have a longer shelf life than raw produce. To prevent extra raw produce from spoiling, you can freeze certain fruits or veggies for future use.

#### What are some budget-friendly tips for eating healthy during the Christmas season?

While it may be tempting to eat out during the holiday season, preparing homemade food can help reduce food cost in the long-term, and allows you to be in control of the ingredients.

# Christmas Movies Actually Podcast

By Krystian

*If you love Christmas movies, you are probably going to enjoy this podcast by Collin Souter and Kerry Finegan, the hosts of Christmas Movies Actually. Find out about the podcast here!*

## What is your podcast all about?

It's a podcast about Christmas movies that takes a look at Christmas movies with a critical eye. I'm a professional film critic, have been one for over 20 years, so having conversations about movies is something that comes naturally to me, but we hope our podcast is fun and engaging. We also talk about movies from the "1,001 Movies You must See Before You Die" book (Kerry has seen 750 of them, at this point) and the latest blu-ray releases every month, just to shift the conversation away from Christmas.

## What should people know about your podcast?

As we say in our description, you don't have to like Christmas to enjoy our show. Our show is primarily about the movies themselves, more than it's about Christmas. Sometimes, we forget about the Christmas of it all, because we get so caught up in other aspects of the film. We're also delving into other holiday-themed films lately, which has been fun. We talked about "The Commitments" for St. Patrick's Day Movies Actually. We also did episodes on Easter ("Jesus Christ Superstar"), the 4th of July ("Independence Day"), Halloween ("ParaNorman") and we'll be doing Thanksgiving in November ("Home For The Holidays"). We like to change things up once in a while. Every episode ends with a weird Christmas song that you've probably never heard before. That's always my favorite part of the editing process, finding the right song for the right episode. I've got hundreds to choose from.

## How did you come up with the name?

I wanted "Christmas movies" to be in the title somewhere, so when people look up "podcast about Christmas movies," ours would be one of the first to pop up. It made sense to me, rather than make the title a head-scratcher that you had to explain to people. Attaching the title to a popular Christmas Movie ("Love Actually") also seemed like a good idea. I don't remember what some of the other ideas were, but we didn't have many before we landed on that one.

## What Kind of Christmas movies do you enjoy?

All kinds, and we try to cover all kinds in our show, although we tend to veer away from the Hallmark/Lifetime stuff, unless there's something truly unique about one ("The March Sisters At Christmas," Hallmark's version of "Little Women," was one for the ages). They're usually pretty bland and there's not much to talk about with them, at least not for us. I tend to enjoy the weirder ones, like "Christmas Evil," or grown-up ones like "The Ref." I do enjoy many of the traditional movies as well, but I love discovering an oddity I never knew existed. Last year, I discovered a bizarre Canadian kids movie called "The Christmas Martian," from 1971, which is indescribable. Look it up, you'll see what I mean. I love stuff like that.

## Do you like the "Home Alone" movies?

Kinda. I mean, the first one is okay. I can watch it. I actually work near where it was filmed, in Winnetka, IL, so I enjoy it for its locations and knowing the interior of the house was actually built and filmed in the New Trier High School swimming pool. But I love John Williams' score. It still moves me. I can't say I enjoyed any of the others, though. That last one made for Disney+ was truly awful, but made for one of my favorite episodes of our show. We had a frequent guest, Matt Fagerholm, on and he's a big fan of the original. We all watched the new one and when it was over, we immediately went to the mics to vent about it. Usually there's a few days' delay between watching the film and talking about it, but the turn-around this time was just a few minutes and so the hatred of it was still fresh. It made for a fun discussion.

## What do you enjoy about Christmas?

Trader Joe's Vintage Ale, for starters. I also enjoy glugg. I love the decorating (day after Thanksgiving, always). Kerry has been getting new additions to our movie-themed Christmas village every year. We have the house from "A Christmas Story," the "Christmas Vacation" house (along with Cousin Eddy's trailer), a drive-in concession stand, Nakatomi Plaza from "Die Hard," and the movie theater from "It's A Wonderful Life." I guess we should have the house from "Home Alone" in there at some point. And, of course, discovering weird Christmas movies and TV specials from the past is probably the best part.

**Do you like eggnog?** Love it!



Continued on next page



## Christmas Movies Actually, continued

### What else would you like to add?

We're proud of our show. So proud. The range of films covered and having really smart guests join us has been my favorite part about it. I'm also delighted that we stuck to our guns by doing a "Silent Night, Deadly Night" movie every year in October and this year, we finally got to #5, the final film in the series. I love those episodes. Not every episode is for everyone and, even though we record year-round, we're aware most people listen to us during the holiday season, and that's okay. We're happy to have listeners and fans, no matter their listening habits. Thank you all!

### How can people find you online?

I'm on Facebook and Twitter/X. Christmas Movies Actually is on Facebook, Twitter/X and Instagram. People can email us at [christmasmoviesactually@gmail.com](mailto:christmasmoviesactually@gmail.com). NowPlayingNetwork.net.

## Holiday Themed Science Experiments

For more science experiments go here <https://www.cadence-education.com/blog/parents-corner/5-holiday-themed-science-experiments-for-preschoolers/>



During the holiday season, it's important to find different ways to keep your preschooler engaged with learning. As a way to make science fun and festive, you can conduct several holiday themed science experiments with your preschooler. The holiday themed science experiments don't have to be elaborate or complicated, but they are a great way to capture your preschooler's attention so they get excited to learn about science. If you make learning fun for children, they will be more willing to participate and engage with the experiments.

### 1. Candy Cane Experiments

Before eating candy canes, you could have your preschooler perform several experiments using them. To test the candy cane's strength, you could hang different weighted objects on the hook end to see which ones are lighter or heavier than the candy cane. You can easily find objects around your house to use like socks, ribbon, plastic cups, or even a coat hanger.

To learn about the power of observation, you can dissolve the candy cane in different liquids. After pouring the liquids (ex. milk, water, vinegar, juice, etc.) into different jars, your preschooler can place a candy cane in each jar and watch what happens to each candy cane. It's important to watch this experiment over the next few hours and even let it sit overnight.

To make candy canes "dance," you mix baking soda and vinegar in a jar and have your preschooler place a few candy canes inside. The baking soda and vinegar mixture will produce bubbles which will cause the candy canes to move around. If you play a few holiday tunes, you could have a mini dance party of your own.

### 2. New Year's Eve Fireworks

For New Year's Eve fireworks that are safe enough for your preschooler to handle, these simple science experiments are the perfect option. After filling a jar with warm water, place a few drops of food coloring and 4 tablespoons of vegetable oil in a separate bowl. Your preschooler can gently use a fork to break up the food coloring into smaller drops and then dump the bowl into the water jar for the fireworks to occur. Your preschooler can use different colors or use the same color if they prefer.

### 3. Christmas Lights with a Twist

Instead of traditional slime, you can make festive slime with your preschooler. Believe it or not, slime is a simple way to introduce children to chemistry as they mix the borax, starch, and glue together and watch as they change their molecular structures to form a new substance...the slime. For a festive touch, you can add food coloring for holiday colors, colored glitter, and even small decorative holiday beads that will add a unique touch.

As the holiday season is in full swing, it can be easy to bounce from one activity to the next, but it's important to have your children spend some time learning new skills. If you make science fun for your preschooler, they won't even realize they are learning about it.

This article was written by our guest contributor, Valerie Cox. Valerie is a contributing writer for [LOC Scientific](#). In her spare time, she enjoys traveling, spending time with her family, and volunteering in her local community.

## Scary Mazes

By Riley

Last month, I told you that, for Halloween, I got myself a black cloak and a pumpkin mask. It was part of my costume for a scare acting gig in a corn maze out at Horsting's Farm in Cache Creek. I wanted to look scary and cool.

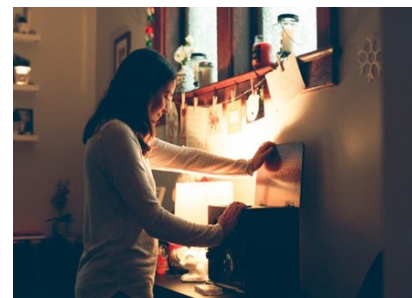


Well, it worked! It went well and it was fun scaring people. Some people screamed! There were lots of other actors in the maze. If you have never gone to a spooky corn maze, I would recommend it for adults, but it is too scary for kids.

# What Do the Lonely Do at Christmas

By Krystian

*Meet Crissi Cochrane, a pop/soul singer-songwriter and recording artist based in Windsor, Ontario, Canada. She is an independent artist, the co-founder of the Windsor music label Soul City Music Co-op, and a mother of two girls, ages 2 and 6. One of her songs, What do the Lonely do at Christmas, is on YouTube and this music video will let you know you are not alone.*



**How did you get into music?** My dad is a musician and my parents are both music lovers, so there was always music playing in my home growing up, and my dad would get out the guitar at family gatherings and campfires. When I was a teenager, there was always an acoustic guitar somewhere in the family room at our house, and in school, I really developed a passion for the recorder and the flute. I started writing my own songs and performing them when I was about 15 years old.

**How did you come up with What Do the Lonely Do at Christmas?** I first heard "What Do the Lonely Do At Christmas" when I was in search of new holiday repertoire in 2016, as I often play a lot of parties and gatherings around the holiday season, and I like to play a good variety of different styles of Christmas music. The song was originally recorded by The Emotions and released in 1973. I love their soulful R&B version, but I took things in a different direction with my recording, partly because I was learning how to self-record at the time, and this was a way for me to learn and experiment. This is one of only three official recordings that I've ever self-produced in my career.

**What does this song mean to you?** To me, this song is an acknowledgement that the holiday season is often a very difficult one. As much as I adore playing classic cozy Christmas songs and tapping into that nostalgic feeling of togetherness and comfort, the reality is that there are many people who experience intense loneliness and depression around the holidays, and it's important to make sure that we do our best to extend love and compassion to them.

**How do you celebrate Christmas?** Having two small children makes Christmas an absolute treasure for me. It's a big responsibility to make the holidays special and bring that magic for the kids, and the season ends up being wildly busy especially when you factor in all the Christmas gigs, but we always make time for baking, crafting, watching our favourite movies, decorating the tree, wrapping gifts, and writing lots of Christmas cards. One of my favourite traditions is listening to some of the Christmas cassette tapes that my grandfather, Terence Cochrane, recorded for me when I was small. On each tape there's a selection of his favourite holiday music (he was a record collector, so he'd get new Christmas albums each year), along with a recording of his voice reading me a letter that sums up all the things that happened to me that year. This will be our first Christmas without him, and I know those tapes are going to be extra special this year.

**What do you enjoy about Christmas?** I'm really sentimental about the holidays. It's a time to revisit my favourite memories from childhood and make new ones. I love both the high-energy excitement of seeing friends and family at celebrations and getting to watch everyone open their gifts on Christmas Day, and also the really calm and reflective energy of being cozied up at home on those nights when the sun sets early and the weather is cold, enjoying calm activities like reading, listening to music, enjoying a hot drink, and keeping my hands busy with crafts and writing cards.

I like making gifts myself as much as possible. I love crafting, so it's nice to have a good purpose for that creativity. One year, I knitted every person in our family a hat, including grandparents and in-laws. I think I made at least a dozen hats. At the time, our youngest daughter was only three months old, and the only place she would nap was on me, so while I was stuck on the couch, I knitted. I also really like going on drives in the early evening with the kids to look at Christmas lights displays around the city.

**What seasonal drink and food do you enjoy?** I love white hot chocolate drinks, or peppermint hot chocolate. My daughter got some hot chocolate bombs last year that were also super fun, and some packets of hot chocolate that changes colours. I love those.

For me, it wouldn't be Christmas without a turkey. I still get nervous that I'll ruin the turkey each year, but I appreciate the challenge. I also really love scalloped potatoes, and my mom has a recipe for a sweet potato casserole with a candied pecan topping that is amazing. Of course, I love all the baked goods and sweets. My favourite is a Greek honey cookie called melomakarona, which my neighbours make.

**What else would you like to add? How can people find you online?** Thank you Krystian for reaching out to me and taking the time to interview me. And thank you to Sarah Kivell for taking the two photos included here, which are from a session we did at my home last Christmas. My music is available on all streaming platforms, and at [crissicochrane.com](http://crissicochrane.com).

# Holidays at Disney

By Krystian

*Christine Fiorelli is the owner of Fairytale Dreams & Destinations, a travel agency located in Bolton, Ontario that specializes in Disney Destination vacations. Christine took some time to talk about their vacation planning!*



## What is your travel agency about?

As an Authorized Disney Vacation Planner, we offer the exact same price as booking directly with The Walt Disney Travel Company. However, the difference is we help with ALL of the important details!

We take the time to get to know your traveling party, learning about your favourite foods, Disney characters and more. We will also discuss in depth dining reservations and Disney's Lightning Lane system. A big part of our job is putting together a personalized itinerary that works for you — we call this your Fairytale Guide. We do this by combining park hours, crowd levels, your dining reservations, and your party's likes/dislikes and more... so that all the details come together to make for a smooth and stress-free experience. Remember there is SO much to do and see that we will narrow down what is important for your family to make the most out of your vacation!

## Why did you want to specialize in Disney?

In 2002, I began planning my honeymoon at *Disney's Grand Floridian Resort & Spa*. Frustrated with not being able to easily plan my dream getaway, I decided to dedicate my time to learn more to help others in similar situations. Receiving a diploma in travel and tourism and aligning myself with a storefront travel agency, I began selling Disney vacations part time. Less than four years later, I bought the travel agency and chose to solely sell Disney Destination Vacations.

## What should people know about your travel agency?

Do you want to meet Anna and Elsa? Pilot the Millennium Falcon? Dine with Mickey? All three? Yep, we can set that up for you. Our small, but mighty (like Ant-Man) team are available via email, phone and in person to see to it that all your magical wishes are met.

When booking your magical vacation with *Fairytale Dreams & Destinations*, you can rest easy knowing that you are working with the most experienced agency in Canada. Over 20 years ago we etched out a space in the Canadian travel industry for agencies that specialized in Disney Destinations. Before you could Rise with the Resistance or help the Guardians save the Galaxy, we were making dreams come true...one fairytale at a time.

## How did you come up with the travel agency name?

My sister and I sat in our living room brainstorming words associated with stories, magic and travel. It took time (any several pieces of paper) to eventually find the right words to string together.

## What should people know about the holidays at Disney?

From impressive decorations to characters dressed in their holiday best, there's nothing quite like Christmas time at The Walt Disney World Resort.

This year, the holiday season kicks off on November 12, 2024. Each of the four major theme parks have seasonal decorations, entertainment, food & drink and more.

## How does Disney celebrate the holidays at their theme parks?

Christmas cheer is spread throughout the entire resort as is transformed for the holidays.

The main highlight is Mickey's Very Merry Christmas Party at Magic Kingdom, as well as EPCOT International Festival of the Holidays, and Jollywood Nights at Disney's Hollywood Studios.

## What do you enjoy about the holidays at Disney?

I thoroughly enjoy visiting the various Disney resort hotels, as they are all individually decorated for the season. Living in a cold climate during winter season, I love feeling warm weather while enjoying such beautiful and elaborate holiday decorations.

## What is your most favorite part of going to Disney?

As soon as I drive under the Walt Disney World sign, I know that for a short time, I can focus on fun and relaxation and not worry about work and stress of everyday life. That feeling is amplified with positive interactions with Cast Members (Disney lingo for employees) and witnessing other Guest's reaction to the magical world around them.

## What kind of holidays do they celebrate besides Christmas if someone doesn't celebrate Christmas?

It's worth sharing that Walt Disney World's extensive chocolate displays, lights and more are associated with the holiday season, rather than religion. The EPCOT International Festival of the Holidays celebrates holidays around the world, such as Hanukkah and Kwanzaa.



## Holiday at Disney, continued

**What kind of special food does Disney have for the holidays?** Walt Disney World has plenty of sweets, sips, savory snacks, and MORE in store during the holidays. From Holiday Peppermint Popcorn to holiday Turkey burgers, there is something for all gingerbread, peppermint, and Christmas cookie lovers out there!



**What else would you like to add?** At Fairytale Dreams & Destinations, we also specialize in the Universal Orlando Resort. Since its opening in 1990, the Universal Orlando Resort has taken theme park thrills to a whole new level – creating the incredible, immersive experience of Harry Potter along the way!

**How can people find you online?** [www.fairytaldestinations.com](http://www.fairytaldestinations.com)

## Movie Review by Ben and Krystian: Meet Me Next Christmas

This holiday season, Krystian and I watched **Meet Me Next Christmas**, and we had a lot of fun! The movie is full of music, holiday cheer, and scenes that make you feel the magic of Christmas. The music in the movie was amazing. We wanted to get up and dance because the songs were so good – We both loved it!

**Meet Me Next Christmas** is a heartwarming story about love, friendship, and the joy of the holidays. It's a great movie to watch with your friends or family. Krystian and I think it's perfect for this time of year because it's all about being together and sharing special moments.

At the start, the movie was a bit boring and a little confusing. But once it got going, it became really exciting! There's a funny part where an actor dresses up like Santa Claus. He's one of Santa's helpers in the movie, and it made us laugh a lot.

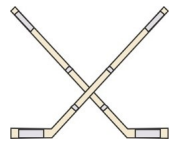
I watched the movie on November 10th at Krystian's house. We had a sleepover and watched it together, which made it even more fun. We think you should watch this movie with someone special too. It's a film that will bring you closer and put you in the holiday spirit.

Overall, we both really enjoyed **Meet Me Next Christmas** and give it two thumbs up. We can't wait for you to see it and feel the Christmas joy just like we did!

## Kamloops Blazers Report (2024-2025)

By Andrew

The Kamloops Blazers are less than a month away from completing the first half of the season before Christmas and have an impressive 10 (Wins), 8 (Losses), and 1 (Overtime Loss) for 21 points and sit third in the B.C. Division. They have 8 (3 Home and 5 Away) more games to finish off the month of November. The Blazers will look to finish the year's first half strong and continue that strong play into 2025.



## Tea Light Snowmen

By Tami

Crafting during the winter months offers some fun when you are stuck inside because of the snow and ice. It helps boost your mood, as creating something yourself gives you a sense of accomplishment. Crafting also provides a calming escape from the stress of the season, helping you to relax and unwind – it can keep you out of your head, because you are concentrating on what you are making. It's a great way to explore your creativity and try new things, whether you're crafting alone or with family and friends.

Snowmen supplies:

LED tea light

Black, fine-tipped Sharpie marker

Ribbon (whatever colour you prefer), about 2 inches long

2 Pom poms, small – same colour as ribbon

Pipe cleaner – same colour as ribbon, about 1 inch long

Glue gun



Using the Sharpie, make 2 eyes above the "flame" of the candle and a mouth below the "flame".

Glue the pipe cleaner across the top of the candle (see image)

Glue the pom poms onto the ends of the pipe cleaner.

Use the ribbon to create a scarf at the bottom of the snowman's head (see image)

# Autism Friendly Christmas

By Krystian

*Courtney Murawski is a Board Certified Behavior Analyst and the Clinical Director at LifeSpeed: Behavioral Services. She took some time to share ideas about how to create a sensory sensitive holiday season.*



**How can people deal with Christmas when they have autism and sensory overload?** Although Christmas can be a very exciting time for families, holidays may be very stressful for those with communication challenges and sensory differences. Preparing for holidays in advance and making modifications to your celebrations can help support those with autism.

**How can people with autism reduce sensory overload?** Everyone engages in self-soothing behaviors when they are stressed or overwhelmed, especially individuals with autism. However, many may find it challenging to understand how individuals with autism self-soothe. A person with autism may make repetitive noises and movements or need preferred items and rituals to cope with sensory challenges. Trying to stop or interrupt these coping strategies can cause greater distress for the autistic individual.

**What challenges do people with autism face during the holidays?** Holidays can be stressful for anyone, but because holiday celebrations typically include a significant change in expectations and routine, increased social interactions, and loud, crowded, or unfamiliar environments, these events can be even more stressful for those with autism.

**How can people with autism manage sensory overload during Christmas?** The best way to manage sensory overload is to try to be prepared as best as possible. Knowing what can trigger sensory dysregulation will allow individuals to plan ahead and make modifications to the event so sensory overload is less likely to occur. For example, having easy access to items that are known to help the individuals regulate (e.g., headphones, preferred foods, or favorite sensory items), even having backup or portable options, are important. It also may be necessary to ensure there is a prepared space for regulation (e.g., more isolated area with low lighting, a larger space for increased movement) if that is calming to the individual with autism.

**How can people with autism prepare for holiday events?** One way to help someone prepare for a holiday is talking about the events. This could include an outline of what they can expect the day to look like, who they might see, and where they will go. For those that benefit from visuals, pictures or written schedules may be necessary. In addition, practicing skills that are important in commonly experienced events around the holidays like social interactions (e.g., saying "Thank you" after receiving a gift), self-advocacy (e.g., asking for help), engagement in downtime activities, and tolerating unexpected events (e.g., losing preferred items) may help the day go more smoothly. If possible, exposing the individual to the location of the event (e.g., restaurant, family member's home) may be a helpful way to further prepare for spending time in unfamiliar locations.

**How can people with autism cope with the pressure to be festive?** As social communication for those with autism can look very different than others, it's important to recognize that excitement about the holidays may look different too. Incorporating someone's unique special interests or strengths into the celebration allows for meaningful festivities across abilities. Lastly, spending time with friends and relatives who will understand and accept your loved one's differences may help alleviate some of the pressure to celebrate holidays in a more traditional way.

**How can people with autism manage holiday-related anxiety?** If holidays are very anxiety provoking, it may be helpful to start your own holiday tradition that incorporates something meaningful for all your loved ones. For example, if your child really enjoys going for car rides, spending time driving around while looking at holiday decorations and listening to holiday music may be enjoyable for all.

**How can people with autism handle social interactions during holiday parties?** It may be beneficial for other holiday guests to learn about the individual's socialization differences and preferences before the celebration. For example, breakdowns in communication may be prevented if others are informed of the different communication methods an individual may use (e.g., vocal approximations, sign language, assistive technology, picture icons) or their preferences for physical touch or space. Social interactions may be more meaningful for all if guests understand how they can best communicate with their loved one with autism.

**What are the best holiday gift ideas for children with autism?** Children may enjoy receiving gift cards or memberships for fun activities and experiences instead of toys or sensory items. If crowded or loud spaces aren't ideal for the child, there are an increasing number of play spaces, museums, or movie theaters that offer sensory-friendly events that could be gifted.

**Continued on next page**



# Autism Friendly Christmas, continued

## What sensory-friendly toys do you recommend for children with autism?

Sensory toys can be a great way to provide relief for kids sensitive to touch, sound, sight, movement, and even certain textures. These items could include weighted blankets, Kinetic Sand, compression clothing, scented markers or painting supplies, water toys, fidgets, mini trampoline, sensory lights, or sensory bin mixes.

## What gifts have you found particularly helpful for children with autism?

A lot of our clients really enjoy cause-in-effect toys that are not only fun but promote social and emotional learning. This category includes any type of interactive toy that responds to a child's voice, touch, or movement with sound, light, vibrations, or action, as well as toys that have features to push, pull, or spin. Examples include bubble machines, pop-up toys, marble run or ball drop toys, remote controlled toys, mini-instruments, indoor swings, or a wagon.

## How do you choose inclusive and accessible gifts?

My recommendation is to pay special attention to an individual's special interests, unique preferences, or strengths. For example, if someone has restricted food preferences due to challenges with sensory processing, a gift card to their preferred restaurant may be meaningful. In addition, if someone really enjoys watching videos or movies, a subscription to a streaming service may be the perfect gift.

## What do you enjoy about Christmas?

Personally, my favorite part of Christmas is participating in traditions and sharing laughs with my loved ones.

## How do you celebrate Christmas?

I prefer to spend Christmas with my closest family, eating delicious meals, and relaxing.

## What else would you like to add? How can people find you online?

I can be reached at [cmurawski@uptolifespeed.com](mailto:cmurawski@uptolifespeed.com) and you can find more information about LifeSpeed at [uptolifespeed.com](http://uptolifespeed.com).



- CANDLE
- CANDY CANE
- CAROLS
- CHRISTMAS
- DECORATIONS
- EGGNOG
- ELF ON A SHELF
- FIREPLACE
- FROSTY
- GINGERBREAD
- HANNUKAH
- HOLIDAY
- HOT CHOCOLATE
- ICICLE
- JINGLE BELLS
- MISTLETOE
- NUTCRACKER
- ORNAMENTS
- POINSETTIA
- PRESENTS
- REINDEER
- SANTA CLAUS
- SLEIGH
- SNOWFLAKE
- SNOWMAN
- STOCKING
- TINSEL
- UGLY SWEATER
- WINTER
- WREATH

WORD SEARCH DIRECTIONS: Find and circle the vocabulary words in the grid. Look for them in all directions including backwards and diagonally.





# S.E.A.S.O.N.S Greetings

**The holidays can be a stressful time for many people.  
Try the following tips from Dr. Allison Crawford  
to reduce stress and increase cheer.**

**Stress | Eating and Exercise | Alcohol Sleep | Own Feelings | Needs | Support**

## S

### STRESS

Recognize that the holidays can be stressful for yourself and those around you. Notice any signs of stress (feeling anxious or on edge, trouble sleeping or eating, fatigue, upset stomach). Know what coping strategies work for you.

## E

### EATING AND EXERCISE

Eating is part of the fun, but sometimes we eat to manage stress. Also eating too much can add to feelings of fatigue. Practice mindful eating, stay hydrated, and engage in movement every day to help your mood.

## A

### ALCOHOL IN MODERATION

Even small amounts of alcohol can have a negative effect on sleep and mood. Do you know we also eat more while drinking alcohol? What are other ways you can celebrate? How can you limit what you drink, and how much?

## S

### SLEEP

Getting rest and sleep is one of the best ways to manage stress. And not getting enough sleep can make stress worse. Try to maintain a schedule of when you go to bed, and when you wake up for the best health.

## O

### OWN FEELINGS

There is a lot of social pressure to feel all the holiday feels - joy, laughter etc. But it is more important to be aware of your feelings without judging yourself. So give your inner grinch some space. It is normal to feel holiday blues.

## N

### NEEDS

Know what you need and honour that. Don't feel that you have to say "yes" to everything. It is important to take breaks throughout the day, especially if you're feeling overwhelmed. Go for a walk, read a book, or have a bath.

## S

### SUPPORT

The biggest stress buster is connection with and support from other people. Connect with others (a community event, a friend, a neighbour).

***Give the gift of kindness and love, including to yourself.  
Follow these tips for an authentic holiday.***

**If you are having thoughts of suicide, or are worried  
about someone else, you can reach out by phone or  
text to 9-8-8 Suicide Crisis Helpline.**

**9-8-8**

**Suicide Crisis  
Helpline**

## 988 suicide helpline

By Krystian

*Dr. Allison Crawford is the Chief Medical Officer for 9-8-8: Suicide Crisis Helpline. She took some time to answer our questions about the helpline.*

### **What are the most common triggers for suicidal thoughts during the holiday season?**

Over the holidays people can feel more isolated and lonely. This can be felt more acutely because of societal expectations of what a holiday “should” be like - that you should be happy or having fun with friends or family.

**How does 988 prepare to handle the increased volume of calls during the holidays?** We are there 24/7 every day of the year. We monitor call and text volumes closely, and work closely with our 38 partners that answer 9-8-8 calls and texts, to plan for additional responders to be available if we expect demand for the service to increase.

### **What specific strategies does 988 recommend for individuals feeling isolated or lonely during this time?**

Be aware of how you’re feeling without judging yourself. Feeling lonely at the holidays is very common and it’s important to acknowledge that. If you feel able, reach out and let someone know how you’re feeling. It might be a friend, family member, or other loved one, or it could be someone else in your community, such as a teacher or Elder. Taking the first step to talk about how you are feeling can be hard, but opening up about your feelings can bring relief.

### **Can you share any success stories where 988 interventions have helped prevent suicide during the holidays?**

Behind every piece of data that we use to track how many people we are reaching is a person that has a unique story. We have received heartwarming feedback from many people who felt that 9-8-8 helped them since the service launched. Because 9-8-8 is a confidential service, we don’t share what happens between people who reach out and the responder that they speak to. When we do hear positive feedback we ask for permission to share it with the responder that the person spoke to, so they know the impact their work is having. With permission, we also sometimes share positive feedback on our social media channels and other communications.

### **What resources or support systems does 988 provide to families and friends of individuals at risk of suicide?**

If you are worried about someone you know, you can call or text 9-8-8 anytime and talk to a responder. They will listen to your concerns and help you figure out steps you can take to support the person you are worried about, also to give you support as you navigate this. You can also look on the 9-8-8 website for guidance on how to support people - <https://988.ca/get-help/im-worried-about-someone-else>), as well as a database of local community resources if you want to seek help in your area (<https://988.ca/community-resources>).

### **How can people recognize the signs that they or someone else might need professional mental health support during the holidays?**

Signs that someone might need help show up differently, depending on who the person is and what they are going through. Some examples might be feeling down or anxious, or overwhelmed with negative thoughts, or a loss of hope for a future. You might also notice a change in appetite or sleeping patterns, or not wanting to do things you usually enjoy. Often when people use substances such as alcohol, which picks up over the holidays, that can make things worse. Some of these feelings and behaviours can be part of everyday life, but if they become more frequent or intense, that can be a sign you are struggling and need support. You can find out more about signs to look out for on our website - <https://988.ca/get-help/im-not-sure-if-i-need-help>.

### **What advice does 988 have for individuals who are grieving or dealing with loss during the holiday season?**

For those who are grieving, holidays can accentuate the feelings associated with grief, feelings such as sadness, anger, emptiness, or hopelessness. Even the happy memories that may be evoked by the holidays can be painful reminders. I think we can all be aware of those around us who may be struggling in silence - ensure that we check in and include others when we can.

**You deserve to be heard.  
We’re here to listen.**

A safe space to talk, 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

Call 9-8-8



Text 9-8-8

SMS

**Continued on next page**

## 988 Suicide Helpline, continued

For those experiencing loss, acknowledge your feelings, try to talk to someone, be around others when you can. When you are ready, also consider including your lost loved one in your holiday, such as by putting up a shared ornament or mementos, toasting them, or writing them a holiday letter. If you have traditions this may also be a time to consider making new traditions, even if they are small. Once you have your own self care and support in place, consider reaching out to support others, such as through volunteer work can also lift your own mood and make you feel connected.

### **What are the key warning signs that someone might be considering suicide?**

Suicidal thoughts and behaviour can show up differently depending on who you are and what you are going through. Changes or increases in any of the following things might be signs that someone needs support: if they've been talking about suicide or wanting to die, even if it seems like they're joking, or if they have been experiencing feelings of hopelessness, that things will never get better. Changes in behavior can also be a warning sign, like giving away possessions. If you think someone you know might be thinking of suicide, you can call or text 9-8-8 anytime for support. If it's an emergency, call 911 or go with them to your nearest emergency department.

### **How can individuals effectively support a friend or loved one who is experiencing suicidal thoughts?**

If you're worried about someone in your life, talk to them. Even if it's just a feeling and you're not sure, it's not intrusive to say, 'how are you doing?' or 'I'm worried about you.' Just letting them know that you're there to listen is important, you don't need to have all the answers to support a friend or loved one.

### **What are some common misconceptions about suicide that 988 aims to dispel?**

One of the most common misconceptions about suicide is that people who want to end their lives are at fault for the way they are feeling. Thinking of suicide is not a character flaw. Ideas like this contribute to the stigma that surrounds suicide, which can stop people from asking for help. That's why talking about suicide is important, because it can help break down the stigma and the shame that surrounds suicide.

### **What long-term strategies does 988 suggest for building resilience and preventing suicide?**

Access to mental healthcare, having a supportive social network, building self-esteem and confidence, and having a sense of purpose and belonging can all help reduce the risk of suicide.

### **How can people with mental health issues reach out to their friends or family for support during the holidays?**

Telling someone you are thinking about suicide can feel hard, but it's OK and important to talk about suicide. It can be a difficult conversation to start, but it can help to remember that people often feel a great sense of relief when they finally open up to someone about those feelings. When you're ready to start that conversation, let the person know how hard it is for you to talk about it, and don't be afraid to name your thoughts of suicide.

### **How can people do self care during the holidays in order to protect their mental health? How can individuals set healthy boundaries with family and friends to protect their mental health?**

Show compassion to yourself, not just to others in your life. Try to think about how you're feeling and acknowledge those emotions, whether they're good or bad. Make sure you're taking care of yourself as well as taking care of others. And around the holidays, it's always a good idea to make sure you get enough sleep, and avoid substances which might make you feel worse.

### **What else would you like to add?**

#### **How can people find you online?**

We hope that everyone has the holiday season that is right for them. Take a chance to reach out to others, whether that is a friend, family, a pastor, an Elder, or a neighbor. If you are feeling alone and if you are feeling hopeless, thinking about suicide, or worried about someone else, please reach out to 9-8-8. You can find us and resources online at [www.988.ca](http://www.988.ca). We want to be a source of spirit and light when you need it most.

## How you can help spread the word about 9-8-8: Suicide Crisis Helpline

If you have downloaded this guide, it's probably because you are passionate about suicide prevention and want to help spread the word about 9-8-8 so more people know where they can get help.

Thank you so much! Your support will help more people across Canada get the support they need, in the moment they need it most.

9-8-8

Suicide Crisis Helpline  
Ligne d'aide en cas de  
crise de suicide





# Tribute to Frank Sinatra

By Krystian

*Meet Rick Stephenson, a husband, a father of 4 grown children and a new grandfather. In his spare time, he is an avid tennis player and enjoys the guilty pleasure of playing the Fall-out 4 video game. He is also a musician/singer and a proud 40+ year member of the Toronto Musician Association (American Federation of Musicians). Over the last 40 years, he has played in just about everything from a rock band to a polka band and had his own orchestra. All of these musical experiences have helped him hone his Sinatra craft.*



## What do you do?

Today I focus my musical energy on moving the notes from the page into my heart to share with others. I do a show, Rick Stephenson - His Sinatra, where I showcase my renditions of Sinatra tunes. I am continuing to share the legacy that is Frank Sinatra. I want people to go home feeling like they just attended a Sinatra Concert. I rely on my voice and my innate ability to phrase like Sinatra to deliver that experience. I entertain at corporate events and I have steady requests for my signature Sinatra Cocktail hour. Those shows are me solo with my recordings with my band for backup. I also perform with local musicians, dinner theatres and have a full show I am doing around Canada partnering with local orchestras, symphonies and big bands. It's a blast and I am working with some amazing Canadian musicians.

## How did you get into being a tribute artist?

In the early days when I toured with my band/orchestra we played only instrumentals, and we were often asked if we could add vocals. We didn't have anyone in the band that was a vocalist and as the leader I said I would give it a try. It came naturally for me to transition from my Tommy Dorsey trombone style to singing Sinatra. When I stopped touring with my band I started focusing on primarily Sinatra tunes. I was asked to perform a Sinatra show and I loved it and it was a huge success. And....today I am pleased to say people still enjoy my Sinatra show. In 2023 & 2024 I am nominated for Tribute Artist of the Year in the Josie Music Awards in Nashville. As well for 2024, I have received 6 nominations in the European Red Carpet Music Awards. Highlights of 2023 for me were performing in New York City, with the Swingadelic Big Band and in Hoboken NJ, Sinatra's hometown. .

**What do you enjoy about being on stage?** I love moving people with my voice and the music. To see their smiles and sometimes tears as they reflect on moments in their lives. I feel a deep connection to the music and in turn to the audience. I can get caught up in the emotions while performing songs like I'll Be Seeing You. When the audience is engaged with me, singing along and dancing I feel like we are family and it feels like we are sharing a moment. And life is really just made up of the warm moments we share together. When you string enough of those moments together you have a wonderful life. After every performance I love going out and meeting people and learning about them. I am always blown away by the stories I hear and the love I receive. Recently, after a performance I was approached by a lady with a poster she had me sign at a concert 30 years ago. She was there with the poster for me to sign again. Talk about blown away!

**What do you enjoy about Frank Sinatra?** I love Frank's style, the way he tells a story with his songs, and they make me feel like they are just for me. All my big life experiences were vocalized by Frank in a song. He sang to me about heartbreak long before I knew how it felt. Even as a young man, I felt connected to Frank Sinatra as my mentor and as a father figure, teaching me about life.

**What do you enjoy about his song called Luck be a Lady?** This song was very well written by Frank Loesser. Luck was used as a metaphor for a relationship with all the ups and downs relationships experience. It is a cautionary tale about the importance of nurturing love and the pitfalls if you don't. The strong horns in the middle are my favorite part with the lead trumpet going up an octave in the soli section

## What kind of Sinatra songs do you enjoy?

I am drawn to the sad ballads and complexity of the human spirit that he sings about. A few of my personal favorites are:

I am A Fool To Want You,

When No One Cares

Like A Sad Song

I identify with these sad melancholy songs.

I also love to swing and belt out songs like Come Fly with Me and Ring-A-Ding-Ding.

In my younger years I sang Sinatra's anthem, My Way as the ultimate tribute to him.

Now, My Way is the anthem to my life. I sing it today with more conviction and meaning having more life experience and truly identifying with the lyrics.

**Continued on next page**

## Tribute to Frank Sinatra, continued

### Where are you based?

I reside in beautiful Kingsville, Ontario. It is the most southern town in Canada. It is a warm welcoming small community close to the Windsor/Detroit Border.

I do a lot of travelling, which I enjoy, but I am always happy to come.

### What else would you like to add?

I have just completed my 5<sup>th</sup> album. Singin' For Sinatra. This has been a labour of love. I selected songs that I think Sinatra would have sung if he had the opportunity. This is a significant change for me as my first 4 albums were mostly Sinatra material. It was a challenge to "Sinatraize" songs from artists like Bob Dylan, Gordon Lightfoot, Leonard Cohen and more. I am especially pleased to include a song that was attempted by Sinatra twice but never completed. I finished something he started in 1958. I will let the readers listen and figure out what tune it is on the album. In order to truly continue Sinatra's Legacy, I wanted to introduce my "Modern Sinatra" to a new audience. The new album can be streamed on all major streaming platforms: Apple, Spotify, etc.

**How can people find you online?** <https://hissinatra.com> [facebook.com/HisSinatra](https://www.facebook.com/HisSinatra)  
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDRDkZnJLS3yRyh8jFw7kSg> <https://open.spotify.com/artist/6NYHsQSWGTYFbm1fzIKwp8> [https://music.apple.com/us/artist/rick-stephenson/308520005?  
itsct=music\\_box\\_link&itscg=30200&ls=1&app=music](https://music.apple.com/us/artist/rick-stephenson/308520005?itsct=music_box_link&itscg=30200&ls=1&app=music)

## Lynn as Reba

By Krystian

*Lynn Logan has been a singer and entertainer in a band, duo and solo, for over 20 years now. Over the years, she has had so many people tell me how much she looks and sounds like Reba. After her step-daughter told her that she should do a tribute act to Reba, she got started. Here is more about her journey.*

**What do you enjoy about Reba Lynn?** First of all her southern roots. It's just a different way of life. She's a lot like me. We both love singing and entertaining people and, we both love acting. She's a very upbeat and funny lady and, she's a Christian

**How did you become a tribute artist to Reba McEntire?** I have been a singer and entertainer in a band, duo and solo for over 20 years now. Over the years, I have had so many people tell me how much I look and sound like Reba. I really never thought that but, my step daughter told me that I should do a tribute act to her. So that's how it finally got started.

**What kind of songs do you enjoy from Reba?** I really like the more upbeat and faster songs and, her sassy songs. Like Why Haven't I Heard from You and Fancy of course. I do like some of her ballads but I tend to gravitate to fun songs

**Have you ever seen her in concert?** Unfortunately no.

**What do you like about being on stage?** I have to say, like all other artists, I like the attention. But I also get to be someone else onstage. I get to step out of the everyday normalcy of life. I LOVE to entertain the crowd and to see smiles on their faces and hear them singing along when they hear the songs they love.

**What is your favorite part about acting like Reba?** Just that, acting like Reba. But I do love hearing people say how much they love her songs and how well I believe them.

**What else would you like to add? How can people find you online?** I would love to be able to take my show to a broader audience and even worldwide. So if there are any agents that would like to take me on and book me a tour that would be awesome. In the meantime folks can find me on my website at [www.tributetorebamcentire.com](http://www.tributetorebamcentire.com). There are links to my social media sites also. The more people like and share my page, the more I will be noticed by people who book and by venues.

