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This month, SDG3 Good Health and Wellbeing for All and Sustainability at Christmas

Christmas is meaningless without it!

Christmas for many is a time of festivity, celebration and the bringing together of family and friends to socialise over presents, turkey and alcohol. But for some, this idealised version of Christmas is not their reality.

Wealth, physical fitness and even Christmas are simply meaningless without good mental health and it seems the big build up through December condenses issues such as depression, isolation and loneliness. Peoples problems seem to be turned up a notch at this time of year with over 11,000 calls being made to the charity Samaritans on Christmas day in 2017 and a staggering 400,000 calls being made throughout December last year. There still seems to be some form of stigmatisation around mental health in the UK, even though almost 1 in 4 adults are expected to experience an issue at some point in their life. Although recognition is improving, with Theresa May singling out loneliness as one of the greatest public health challenges the nation faces, a lack in NHS support and overall understanding means people don’t get the diagnosis and treatment they need.

We are bombarded with advertisement and images suggesting Christmas should look a certain way such as being involved in a large family or group of friends, which is something not everyone has. It is a particularly lonely time of year among the elderly with Age UK estimating 450,000 over 65’s faced spending Christmas day alone in 2013 making it a painfully lonely experience for those forgotten in society. Some reasons for such loneliness include elderly people simply not having family members alive especially those who have recently become a widow or widower. Furthermore, social isolation through an inability to leave the house creates a notion of being imprisoned from the rest of the world which is hugely intensified on Christmas day. At the end of the year, some families are struggling financially and feel an overwhelming pressure of providing on Christmas day. Materialism has created the idea that to be happy we must receive and give expensive, generous gifts but the reality is, not everyone can afford such presents. Instead experiences and creative ideas to bring joy without physical gifts means a cheaper and stress-free Christmas. It is estimated that social anxiety disorder affects up to 10% of the UK population and Christmas exacerbates this by creating an expected social performance of people around family members and friends they have not seen for a long time or may have never met! Even the idea of being watched whilst eating Christmas dinner can trigger huge anxiety for some. The best way to tackle loneliness at Christmas is to ensure everyone has someone to see or speak to. Whether that’s keeping an eye out on friends and family or volunteering at organisations that aim to make sure everyone is included at Christmas, such as ‘Contact The Elderly’.

Sometimes its hard to admit that at such an exciting time of year, you don’t actually feel that great, but most the time talking and expressing your feelings out loud to someone can get things off your chest and stop the build-up of anxiety and stress that may be making you lonely or depressed. Furthermore, although Christmas can seem like a busy time of year, trying to keep up with hobbies can help you destress by maintaining a sense of stability and balance in a demanding period of time.

“No one teaches you about loneliness until it happens to you” - Roy, an 85-year-old widower
Ho Ho...Oh?

It’s the most wonderful time of the year. Gifts to buy, queues to beat, loved ones to visit, events to plan, decorations to put up, what’s not to like? Questionably, quite a lot. We focus so much on Christmas day that we start to lose the feel of festivity and the holiday season as a whole. It’s quite easy and common to get stressed in December. Naturally, alongside work and living commitments you now find yourself without a spare moment to actually sit down and look after number one. Although, there are things you can do to effectively coordinate your festivities to make sure you still get a breather.

Secrets to a Stress Free Christmas

Plan – start making a list or write some notes on your calendars to make sure you have enough time to get presents or get responses from loved ones for your festivities. There’s nothing worse than unexpected drama to postpone your plans more than you anticipated. Try to prioritise your list; can they be done now, and are they essential? It’s probably best to assume you can’t do everything on Christmas Eve!

Sleep – easier said than done, although not having regular rest will inevitably leave you waking up in the same mood you went to bed in. If you have trouble sleeping, try going to bed earlier than usual, with no electronic devices. This is usually a good time to make a list of Christmas idea’s whilst you’re relaxing after a busy day.

Rest – decide when you want to stop your Christmas preparations and enjoy the holiday! There’s only so much you can do in a given time, work towards an end goal, remember that Christmas is your holiday too. You earned it.

Help – it’s always at hand. You may feel that you don’t want to pester anybody around this time of year as they will have their own problems too. But you will be surprised. You are not the only one juggling with time. Your friends or family may have some tips on presents to buy or dates to catch up. Even having a shopping partner is a more relaxing way to kill two birds with one stone.

 Feeling recharged, you’ll be more effective at ticking off that Christmas list!

The Enactus Edit: Enactus Liverpool Tackle SDG3: Good Health and Wellbeing

Our project Plastix aims to tackle both single use plastic waste and loneliness. So far we have been collecting unrecycled plastic bottles from local business and making them into Christmas wreaths with the elderly in local care homes around Liverpool. Tackling loneliness is one of the key issues at Christmas, and one often sadly forgotten. Interacting with our members during the craft sessions helps to greatly improve health and wellbeing amongst the elderly.

An estimated 450,000 people over 65 face the prospect of Christmas alone

1 in 20 people consider Christmas more stressful than a burglary

Keep Calm its Only Christmas!
Research, Official Development Assistance and the SDGs

In 2015 the UK government, as part of its international aid effort, began to provide funding for research which benefits low- and middle-income countries and assists them in meeting the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

This was a new way to deliver Official Development Assistance (ODA). ODA is the key measure used for setting most aid targets and assessing aid performance. The OECD (a group of mainly well-off countries) defines what type of spending can count as ODA (which prevents countries from counting military aid as ODA).

Previously ODA spending was mostly carried out by DfID (the Department for International Development) but ODA spending was now being redistributed to other government departments. For example, BEIS (Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy – responsible for universities and research) established the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) (£1.5 billion 2016-2021) and the Newton Fund (£735M).

To be ODA eligible, research needs to:

- have the primary objective of promoting the economic growth or welfare of developing countries (low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) as defined by the OECD);
- deliver outcomes which align with country priorities, UK aid strategy, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

UoL have done well so far. We have 125 projects working in over 35 LMICs. We were ranked 10th in the UK in a Research Professional analysis based on the value of GCRF and Newton grants 2014-2018 (don’t we all love tables where we do well!). We have built up an impressive portfolio of projects. Here are just five:

- One Health HORN – research capability building in the interconnectedness of animal, human and environmental health in Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, and Djibouti (see Figure 1)
- The Antislavery Knowledge Network - developing community-led strategies to combat modern slavery in West and Central Africa;
- War-PATH - developing warfarin anticoagulation services for cardiovascular disease in Uganda and South Africa (see Figure 2);
- Clean energy through practical hydrogen-fuelled vehicles in China;
- Preserving Yazidi heritage and Identity – training Yazidi youth to preserve their tangible and intangible heritage following widespread destruction by Islamic State

![Figure 1. A “sandpit” event held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 2018 as part of the HORN project to develop new areas of research and build research capacity](image1)

![Figure 2. The War-PATH team at the Infectious Diseases Institute, Kampala, Uganda celebrate recruiting the first 100 patients to the study, Dr Catriona Waitt (middle) is from our Institute of Translational Medicine.](image2)
To keep this pipeline of projects going, we run a regular ODA Research Seed Fund for our academics to access pump priming funds to carry out preliminary research (e.g. to collect pilot data or to develop proof-of-concept) and build relationships with partners in LMICs. We’ve been collecting images of some of these projects and are pleased to share some of these with you (see Figures 3 and 4).

Figure 3. Dr Alex Balch (left) from the Politics Department in Ghana developing ideas which led on to the anti-slavery network project

Figure 4. A joint team from our School of Architecture and the Mysore School of Architecture during a guided visit to the Srirangapatna World Heritage Site

It’s been challenging getting to grips with ODA requirements and measuring the impact of projects. We have had to consider what research capacity building involves. We have developed partnerships in countries we might not have previously considered. We have had to rethink what truly equitable partnerships look like. But by engaging in these projects we have been able to deliver research that makes a tangible difference for some of the most vulnerable populations.

We’re planning to spotlight more of these projects in future issues. If you would like to learn more see our Intranet site: https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/intranet/international-funding-opportunities/ or drop us a line.

William Mitchell, Research, Partnerships and Innovation

Do you have any stories or published academic research linked the SDGs? Do you want to feature in the monthly newsletter, or interested in joining the team? Just email sbility@liverpool.ac.uk, for a chance to feature or register your interest.

Liverpool Triumph at the Sustainable Travel Awards 2018

The University of Liverpool’s Sustainability team have recently beaten off stiff competition to win the Sustainable Travel Champion 2018 award at the Arrive Happy Liverpool City Region Sustainable Travel Champion Awards 2018! The award was presented by Liverpool born actor, presenter, environmentalist and keen cyclist Simon O’Brien and recognises the great work around walking and cycling that the Sustainability team is doing to really make a difference. Promoting sustainable transport within the University community and across the city region, focussing on the links with health and wellbeing and affordability and accessibility.

Congratulations to the team!
Make Christmas Green Again!

SDG 1: Do they know its Christmas time at all? Re-gift your gifts. Everyone receives an unwanted gift at one time or another, instead of letting them pile up donate these gifts to charities such as KIND; a Liverpool based charity helping children and families to cope with poverty.

SDG 2: Feed the World Help reduce food waste, by using up any Christmas leftovers this year.

SDG 3: it’ll be lonely this Christmas: Don’t leave everything till the last minute to reduce your stress and anxiety, and be sure to check on friends, family and neighbours, but particularly those that are elderly and vulnerable.

SDG 5: I don’t want a lot for Christmas, just gender equality: Share the workload this Christmas, and ensure the burden doesn’t fall on one person, with the added benefit of instilling the value of gender equality in children and others around you.

SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy: Ditch the extravagant Christmas lights for simple LEDs ones; they use 90% less energy and are much more cost-efficient.

SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities: Support your local community by getting your gifts and grub from local shops.

Try Baltic market open Tuesday-Sunday with farmer’s and gift market’s from local suppliers, as well as festive food to get you through the stress of shopping. For cheeseboards and chutneys try the Liverpool Cheese company, based on Woolton Street. Sweet tooth? Try Dafna’s Cheesecake Factory for desert, situated on Smithdown Road, established in 1973 and still under the same ownership.

SDG 14: “Plastic Packaging isn’t just for Christmas, its for Life” - Sir David Attenborough: Reduce your plastic ‘footprint’ over this year’s festive period, avoid buying metallic and shiny wrapping paper as these are non-recyclable, ditch the tinsel for pinecones and avoid using plastic plates and cups at Christmas parties.

SDG 15: Rockin Robin, rock, rock: 22% of the currently known animal breeds are at risk of extinction. Help halt the loss of biodiversity by creating a wildlife haven in your garden. Birds find it difficult to find natural food in the winter, provide them with lots of seeds, fruit and fresh water to help them survive the cold winter climate.

Have a Merry and Sustainable Christmas!

Diabetic Diet: cutting down on both salt and sugar is key for controlling diabetes. Try making some healthier homemade cakes, reducing the consumption of takeaways and enhance food with herbs and spices rather than salt.

Lower that risk! Aged between 19-64? You should aim to do 150 minutes a week of moderate to vigorous exercise. Start slow with simple exercises such as walking or yoga and build up to more strenuous ones.

The Dangerous World of Diabetes

Diabetes is a serious, chronic disease when either the pancreas cannot produce enough insulin or the body cannot use the insulin effectively. Health problems associated with Diabetes include heart disease, vision loss and kidney dysfunction. An estimated 4.6 million in the UK are living with Diabetes, 90% of which are diagnosed Type 2 Diabetes. With the nations waistbands continuing to expand there is no doubt that the national burden of Type 2 Diabetes will continue to grow.

At Risk? Know your Type 2 Diabetes Risk by using Diabetes UK online quiz

114.1M people are at increased risk of Type 2 Diabetes

Try this Christmas dinner pie https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/roast-potato-turkey-sausage-stuffing-pie

12.3M people are at increased risk of Type 2 Diabetes
The 24th conference on climate has recently taken place in Poland with 197 delegates attending from the countries across the world; to discuss climate action. The focus of these talks was to, try and solidify the progress in climate agreements made in Paris three years earlier (COP 21). The importance of this was shown in the recent IPCC (International Panel on Climate Change) report urging the problems of 1.5 degrees warming, of which, we have already warmed the planet by 1 degrees since pre-industrial times. Also, there were key speeches from celebrity figures, such as David Attenborough, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Al Gore, Nicolas Stern and Noam Chomsky, urging not just politicians to come to agreements, and for the people to stand up and show the politicians that we need agreements.

To limit the warming to 1.5 degrees, serious action needs to take in the next 2-3 years otherwise the impacts on the climate will be uncontrollable. The current impacts are not distributed evenly, and Western Europe will be one of the last to feel the most severe impacts. However, it needs to be one of the first to make changes; to the countries’, to the companies’ and to the peoples’ pollution habits.

While the politicians squabble over minor difficulties the lack of climate action is detrimental. The sustainability of our planet is in our hands and we can make a difference. Supporting your local environmental related organisations such as the University of Liverpool Sustainability Team or Friends of the Earth. There are also many youth focused organisations who are taking action such UK Youth Climate Coalition (UKYCC,) and Youth Climate Movement (YouNGO). Giving up a small amount of time to take part in these organisations can help make a difference, every action counts, it is our future.

Protests took place at the conference to try and highlight the lack of action, but they need more support. Support your environment by joining one of these group. The movements are growing. Collectively we are becoming educated. The oceans may are rising; but so are we.