

AT THE 
OF FAMILY LIFE

WINTER
2020

ni4kids

MAGAZINE

 **KEEP CALM & CARRY ON**
A New Christmas Adventure

 **YOU'RE AMAZING**
The Ultimate Parent Pep Talk

 **LET'S PLAY**
Outdoor Fun & Games

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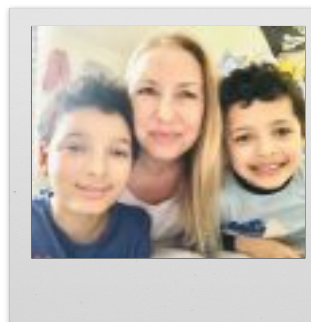
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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

When you are a kid, people (should) tell you how amazing you are all the time. Parents gasp in awe and wonder at all the marvellous things you can do and how funny, sweet and clever you are – most of the time. That's our most important job, and our commitment to our children, to bring up confident, happy, well-adjusted kids who will one day make their own contribution to society and help change the world for the better. Debbi Marco's article in this issue made me realise that when you become a mum or dad, you tend to heap so much praise and admiration on your children, that perhaps we don't stop to tell ourselves just how awesome we are enough – and we are, all of us! We are doing a great job, despite the knocks and the stress of this mad year. So, grab a cuppa, chill out for 10 minutes – I insist – and read the ultimate pep talk for parents on page 17 to remind yourself just how amazing you truly are. As we step into a new season there's really no need to hibernate inside. Wrap up, get outside in the fresh air and rediscover childhood memories of the simple joys of playing a fun game with friends or family on your doorstep. We've got stacks of super suggestions for having fun while staying safe on page 10. Something that really grabbed my attention in this issue was Dave Linton's appeal on page 12 to remind us



of the plight of the large amount of children in care in Northern Ireland who desperately need a loving home. Sadly, during the pandemic their numbers have risen further so if you have ever thought about fostering, please do read on and consider getting in touch with Action For Children to find out how. What else is inside this wondrous winter issue? On page 16 meet 12-year-old Omari McQueen – he's a fantastic chef, a TV star and the CEO of his own company. What a boy! And, if you are worried that the Grinch really might have stolen everything merry and bright this year – don't be! Amanda Ashy-Boyd is on hand (pages 6 & 7) with calming tips and techniques to coax us right up to a very happy Christmas.

Nadia X

Get in touch: Email me at editor@ni4kids.com

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Winter Midweek Brown June 2018
Read/Unread Last 4 Weeks



★★★★★
ROE PARK
Resort

WIN A TWO-NIGHT B&B FAMILY ESCAPE TO ROE PARK RESORT

The award-winning 4-star Roe Park Resort, Limavady, re-opened this autumn with a host of new additions to make a family staycation one to remember.

Take a dip in the indoor-heated pool, or practise your swing at Northern Ireland's only 18-bay driving range, before enjoying a delicious dinner at the resort's new Courtyard Restaurant, the perfect relaxed and spacious setting for a family meal where Head chef, Desy McCallion has created a mouth-watering new menu of dishes inspired by the quality, fresh produce available on the resort's doorstep. With acres of space for families to roam the grounds and explore the Roe Valley Country Park, the Roe Park Resort is perfectly placed on the edge of the North Coast for a well-deserved getaway to blow away those lockdown cobwebs. And... Relax.

To be in with a chance to win this fabulous family treat, simply visit ni4kids.com/competitions and answer the following question:

Q) What is the name of Roe Park Resort's new restaurant?

Visit roeparkresort.com for offers or Tel: 028 7772 2222 for reservations.

Terms & Conditions: Competition closes on Friday 11 December 2020. One winner will be selected at random from all entries received. Prize is two nights B&B for a family of four sharing a Family Suite, including dinner in the Courtyard Restaurant on one evening. The prize is valid for a midweek stay excluding bank holidays and special events. Complimentary dinner excludes alcohol. No cash alternative. Editor's decision is final. Ni4kids T&Cs apply, visit ni4kids.com/competitions for details.



THE COUNTDOWN TO CHRISTMAS

From bottom clockwise: Holly Jolly Christmas Advent, £35, The 12 Days of Christmas | Wooden Gingerbread House Advent Calendar, £20, House of Fraser | Harry Potter Funko Pop Advent Calendar, £49.99, Amazon | Peppa Pig Advent Calendar, £19.99, Very | Scratch North Pole Advent Calendar By Maps International, £5.99, Not On The High Street | Red Wooden Reindeer Advent, £30, The Contemporary Home | Marvel 7 Days Until Christmas Countdown Tin, £12, The Works | Pop Princess 12 Days Beauty Advent, £17.99, Mad Beauty | Percy Pig Advent Calendar, £5, M&S | Personalised Snowman Advent Calendar by Dibor, £22, Next | Night Before Christmas Advent Calendar, £15.95, Papermash | Plasticine Advent Calendar, £17.99, Mulberry Bush | Keepsake Personalised Baby's First Advent Calendar by Max Made Me Do It, £20, Not On The High Street | Playmobil Christmas Grotto Advent Calendar, £15.99, Smyths Toys

9-11am

The time voted by parents as the happiest parenting hours of the day.

Everybody's Talking About

NEWS | PRODUCTS | PEOPLE | PLACES

82%

The number of parents who feel there is too much sugar in drinks targeted at youngsters.



Odd Socks Day

TV star Andy Day is calling on schools and youth organisations across Northern Ireland to join together for their first ever link up with Odd Socks Day on Monday 16 November, as part of Anti-Bullying Week,

when the CBeebies star and his band Andy and the Odd Socks will be launching their new charity single 'The Kids Are United'. The song's video, made by hundreds of pupils in their 'bubbles' in schools across the UK, encourages young and old alike to wear odd socks to school or work and celebrate what makes us all unique. Andy and the band will be sharing their song and discussing bullying in an online assembly to schools across the UK on the morning of Odd Socks Day, which also features messages of support from Mo Farah, McFly and Anne-Marie. Anti-Bullying Week 2020 runs from 16-20 November 2020. To download a free Anti-Bullying Week resource pack go to endbullying.org.uk

Helping Women & Children Break Free From Hunger

An international development charity appeal supported by Ni4Kids has raised over £1.8 million to help women and children in some of the world's poorest countries. Concern Worldwide's Free from Hunger appeal raised a total of £1.84 million, including £858,961 of matched funding from the UK government as part of its Aid Match scheme. These funds have gone towards Concern's work to improve the health and nutrition of pregnant women, new mothers and children under five in the Central African Republic which has one of the highest rates of child mortality and is ranked as the world's hungriest country. Danny Harvey, Executive Director of Concern (UK), said: "We are so grateful to the public for their generous donations. Without their support, and the support of UK aid, projects like this, which truly save lives, would not exist. This initiative will bring with it positive, sustainable change in the region." The appeal ran between September and December 2019 and was supported by partners Ni4Kids, Mumsnet, the Daily Mirror NI, Belfast Live and London Bridge City Management.



Matron Emellienne Mapouka (39) with six-month-old Rosalia and mum Hortense Mbolidere.
Photo: Chris de Bode/Panos for Concern, CAR

Art For All

A welcome funding award will allow Young at Art to grow and extend the impact of its Education and Engagement programme in 2021, providing additional support to school children in some of Northern Ireland's most marginalised communities. Through its Creative Child, Creative Teacher and Journeys and Stories projects, Young at Art intends to work with 1500 children plus 200 teachers/adults in the children's lives. Many of the schools are located in the most deprived areas in NI with the children facing issues including, digital poverty, limited or no access to books, toys or play materials at home, family members facing mental health issues, as well as poor language and verbal skills and poor nutrition. Young at Art Director, Eibhlin de Barra said; "Garfield Weston Foundation's support will help us to extend the impact of our Education and Engagement programmes in 2020-21, enabling us to work with teachers and parents to build their resilience and enable them to reach their full potential in this changing and evolving 'new normal', devising and delivering more high-quality arts-based learning projects that reach as many children and young people as possible."



66% Of Parents In NI Have No Will

The majority of parents in the UK have not written a will and therefore have not appointed legal guardians for their children, a survey has revealed. The poll by Will Aid, a national will-writing campaign, found that a staggering 66% of parents from Northern Ireland had no will meaning that if they should die without appointing a guardian, and there is no other

parent with parental responsibility, a court could step in to decide with whom their child would live with. Will Aid Month sees participating solicitors waive their fees for writing basic wills during November, instead inviting clients to make a voluntary donation to Will Aid, with these funds supporting the vital work of nine partner charities, including the NSPCC and Save the Children. For more information and to book visit willaid.org.uk



Ni4kids is delighted to welcome the Parentline NI Podcast to our free online resources centre at ni4kids.com. To raise thriving children, parents need better support so Parentline NI is here for all parents offering guidance or advice wherever you are on the parenting journey. The Parentline podcasts will explore the ups and downs of parenting with honest and frank discussions to support parents to lay the strongest possible foundations for their children. Parentline NI is a helpline for parents operated by Children in Northern Ireland.



A New Christmas Adventure

BY AMANDA
ASHY-BOYD



Change is hard. Especially personal change because there is so much uncertainty around the outcome. When we feel uncertain, it can make us feel unsafe. Why? Because uncertainty drops us into our limbic brain, our emotional centre where we swirl around in the emotional waters of fear, confusion, frustration, sorrow, despair. But we can change that! Uncertainty can bring fear, but it can also bring freedom and the incredible thing about the human brain is we get to choose if we feel fearful or free. Choice is always the one thing we know we have...



This is a magical time of year and there is no reason this magic shouldn't stay alive. As we prepare for the festive season there are a few things you can do to help you make the best choices for your whole family, especially your children. Children listen to the unspoken body language of their parents: facial expressions, eye contact, vocal tone, to help them assess a situation. They unconsciously learn from what they see rather than what they're told, so as you embark on your quest for a merry and joyful Christmastime, one thing you can do to ready yourself for the change is to tweak your everyday routine by adding some simple mindfulness techniques. This takes no extra time (something parents simply don't have) so don't worry. These mindfulness techniques are easy ways to connect the mind and body and also to bring a sense of calm into your body. The connection and calm radiating from you will deliver an unspoken message to your children that they are safe, loved and that the joys of the Christmas season will not be stolen by the Grinch of 2020! Read on for my practical tips for parents, carers and kids to reconnect with themselves, remember the true meaning of Christmas spirit and get ready for a calmer Christmas adventure!

Tips For Parents:

After swimming in the choppy waters of 2020 for months and months, many of us are mentally, physically and emotionally exhausted. We need a reprise. Your resilient body and mind can give you that with a tiny shift in your mindset. Adding these simple mindfulness techniques will provide the mind and body with a sense of stability, strength and clarity. Once you are steady, you can then shift your attention to problem solving and making the best of a different situation.

1) GROUNDING: Notice when you're projecting towards an unknown future and then make a choice to come into the present moment. We don't know what the future holds, but we know what is happening right here in this moment. Come into the present by noticing all of the sounds in the room. How far outside of the room can you hear sounds? Open up your sense of sound fully and listen to the symphony happening around you.

2) STEADYING: Steady yourself by regularly noticing your breath and focusing on long inhales and exhales. Place a hand on your belly and make sure the breath is travelling down beyond your chest. Three conscious breaths, three to four times a day is a wonderful and nourishing mind and body reset.

3) GRATITUDE: Our brain has a tendency to focus on the negative but you can rewire the neural pathways in your brain by practicing gratitude. Gratitude helps you notice all of the good around us, whether that's the trees blowing in the wind, birds singing their morning song, children laughing, warm morning coffee or an extended hug with your partner. No matter how rubbish your day was, make sure to feel those hard feelings, but monitor the stories that are being created by those feelings. You can refocus your attention by practicing gratitude each morning before opening your eyes and as the last thing you do before drifting off into sleep.

Keeping Kids Happy

This Christmas:

Similar to every other holiday and celebration this year, Christmas will be different. When things are different to how you might expect them to be, there will understandably be some disappointment. And that is totally okay. But children will quickly mirror back to you what they feel from you, and that is where the Christmas spirit lives – inside of YOU. Dr Dan Siegel, a child and adolescent psychological expert says “as children develop their brains ‘mirror’ their parent’s brain”. So, let’s show our children that the spirit of Christmas is still alive inside of us all, regardless of the changes we might experience. How many people are around to celebrate; how many gifts are under the tree and how much food is spread across the table... The details might be a bit different but the meaning of Christmas is still as important as ever. And the ultimate meaning behind Christmas is being with the people we love to celebrate life. You can support your children during this time by making new and meaningful Christmas memories. Our memories are stored in our brain forever and if after all of our trials and challenges from this year we are able to create some magical memories with our children, that will live inside of them for many years to come.

Tips For Children:

Children are highly sensory beings so providing them with fun and creative outlets will not only make new magical Christmas memories, but it’ll also allow them to express their emotions so prepare some fun family activities you can do together to keep the joys of Christmas alive. Here are some suggestions to keep the kids excited during the countdown to Christmas Day:



BAKE CHRISTMAS COOKIES: Baking is a wonderful holiday tradition to start and it’s also a great mindfulness activity because it’s creative, fun and also brings you into the present moment. The present moment is a great place to be because then we’re not creating stories about the past or worrying

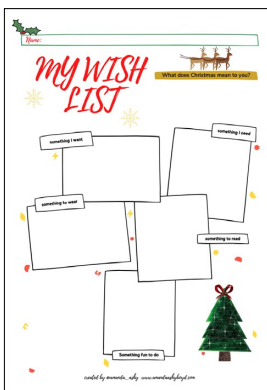
about the future. Making Christmas Tree cookies is an inexpensive and easy activity to do with kids because it really only requires four ingredients: flour, baking powder, sugar and an egg and just add a bit of green food colouring. To avoid needing a special cookie cutter, simply make varying sizes of triangles with the cookie dough so you can have big and small trees. Then, cut out some dough squares to make the tree trunks and decorate with raisins. Voila!



GRATITUDE CHRISTMAS TREE ORNAMENT:

Make a gratitude hand to hang on your tree. First, make an example hand ahead of time to show the kids so they have a visual and can

get excited about the project. It doesn’t need to be fancy, just an example. Then choose a day to make your ornaments. Each family member will trace their hand, decorate it with either paint or markers and cut it out. Leave space when you’re decorating your hand to list three things you’re grateful for in your life. If younger children need an explanation of what gratitude is, an easy explanation is – noticing all of the good, beautiful things in your life that make you happy. Most young children will be grateful for their family, friends, food and their cuddly toys. This is perfect!



MAKE A MEANINGFUL CHRISTMAS WISH LIST:

Gift giving has a whole new meaning and this year it can include a meaningful adventure for your child which will make a lasting memory for the entire family. Click [here](#) for this PDF downloadable

example to use for the whole family.

- Something I want (the big Christmas gift)
- Something I need (hobby item, sports, school necessity)
- Something to wear (clothes, shoes, accessories)
- Something to read (book, magazine, album)
- Something fun to do (horse riding, ice skating, observatory, zip-lining)



CREATE A CHRISTMAS PLAYLIST: Singing, expressing and dancing all bring joy into your body, and if our body feels joy then your mind feels joy. Get the family together and each of you choose three of your favourite Christmas songs to add to your family playlist. This could become your special Covid Christmas Playlist and these versions of the songs that you choose will forever remind you of how you came together as a family during one of the hardest times for humanity ever in our lifetime.

When we recognise that we can choose how to create our reality, that gives us so much power. The ability to do this comes when we are able to bring stability, strength and clarity into our body and mind. As parents, practicing these mindfulness techniques can help you achieve this and then, that in turn will be passed down to your children.

It’s been an incredibly tough year, and we have overcome so much as a collective human race but noticing the good at a time like now can be challenging. The best way to do that, is to be present in this moment, not the past, not the future. Be here now and know that whatever comes next, we’ve got it!

Wishing you all a very meaningful Christmas adventure together.

Amanda is a Child Mindfulness Expert, yoga teacher and the founder of Grounded Little Minds a fun, online course for children aged 7 to 11 to learn how to boost their emotional intelligence and grow their social-emotional wellbeing. See amandaashyboyd.com/grounded-little-minds for more information.

MAKE THE MOST OF FAMILY TIME WITH HEALTHY HABITS

For many Northern Ireland families being able to spend more quality time together has been a positive upside of the coronavirus pandemic. Despite the parental struggles of balancing working from home, trying to keep our kids' schoolwork on track and keeping the house clean and tidy, parents feel spending so much time together has strengthened the family unit.

It has provided a unique opportunity for parents to prioritise 'family time' and ensure their children are protected, happy and healthy during this tough, and often very stressful, pandemic. The START campaign is here to help them with that, by encouraging parents to use their increased focus on 'family time' to start or re-introduce healthy habits and start their children on the way to healthier life. It is about supporting parents in making small changes to what we eat and how active we are, sticking with them and turning those changes into long-term healthy habits. These new healthy habits might be swapping screen time for getting active outdoors by going for a walk in the local park or playing a game of football in the back garden. Getting children to help in the preparation and serving of a home-cooked meal that the family can sit down and enjoy together is simple, yet effective healthy habit. Kids can help with simple tasks such as setting the table, washing the vegetables or serving their siblings. Some families might enjoy indoors activities that everyone can take part in such as a treasure hunt or playing board games. Other children might prefer solving puzzles, colouring-in or painting. And of course, 'family time' works best when everyone has had a

good night's sleep. Whatever the age and interests of children, it's important to remember that when it comes to raising healthy kids, big wins start with small changes. Endorsing the campaign, local Radio presenter and father of four, Ibe Sesay, said: "As a parent, I know the challenges we've all faced during the coronavirus pandemic, from balancing working from home, to running a household, and trying to keep our kids' schoolwork on track. Yet, spending so much time with my wife and children has undoubtedly strengthened our family unit and made us prioritise the time we spend together. "The START campaign is encouraging parents to help our children feel happier and healthier during this pandemic by making the most of 'family time' and using this time together to support family health and wellbeing. This might a family walk, which has become a precious time of the day that everyone looks forward to in my household or getting everyone involved in the preparation and cooking of a healthy, nutritious family meal."

Ibe Sesay and family are supporting the START Campaign.



PRACTICAL TIPS AND ADVICE ON USING 'FAMILY TIME TO INTRODUCE SMALL, POSITIVE CHANGES:

- **IT'S A TEAM EFFORT:** Agree between everyone what small changes you're going to make – that way, you're all part of it so that's it less of a 'you versus them' approach.
- **GIVE IT TIME:** Make small changes and try to stick with them. There will be ups and downs but sticking to them makes it easier in the long run.
- **GET KIDS INVOLVED IN FOOD:** Include your children in meal planning and preparing dinner or making a healthy snack together to encourage participation and help them develop the necessary skills to plan and cook healthy meals.

- **MAKE EXERCISE A FAMILY AFFAIR:** Take your kids to the park for a walk, bike ride or to play a game of football. Make walking the dog a fun game by counting how many times the dog stops or get moving together indoors using some YouTube exercise videos.

- **PLAY FAMILY GAMES TOGETHER:** Try sitting down as a family to play a board games, 20 questions or charades. Games bring people together and will help parents to reclaim family time.

- **SLEEP MATTERS:** Getting enough good quality sleep is very important for all the family. Simple steps like leaving phones and devices outside the bedroom at night will help create a more relaxing and calming atmosphere for everyone.

- **DON'T BE TOO HARD ON YOURSELF** – the past few months have been difficult for parents. You are doing your best to keep it all going!



To find out more about the **START** campaign visit makeastart.org

When it comes to raising healthy kids,
big wins start with small changes, like
swapping the couch for a kick around.



Make the most of family time.
Add a healthy habit today.

#onedailywin



Let's Play

Encouraging kids to rediscover the fun and freedom of the great outdoors

Words by Elizabeth McGivern

When you look back on your childhood is it filled with nostalgic memories of long days spent playing outdoors with friends? Can you see yourself running around the streets you lived in or at a nearby beach or park? Whatever the weather?

Most adults will look back on this time with fondness but can the same be said for your own children? After months of staying safe at home with their family, children are losing out in the freedom of the outside world by not being allowed to play within their own neighbourhood for many reasons – not all of which are connected with concerns over Covid-19. In recent years, a survey conducted on behalf of Persil's 'Dirt Is Good' campaign, found that three-quarters of UK children spent less time outside than prison inmates, less than one hour a day. At the time, experts warned that active outdoor play is essential to the health and development of children, but parents' fears, lack of green spaces and the lure of digital technology was leading youngsters to increasingly lead enclosed lives. After a spring and summer of lockdown, many parents (and children) may understandably have trepidations about being outside when the virus is still very much a part of our lives, however to inspire you all to get out more, we've gathered together some excellent game suggestions (that can all still be played while socially distancing) so that the kids can reclaim the simple joy of playing outside in their own street or garden, and discover the freedom and fun of the great outdoors once again.

Kirby

Two players stand on the curb opposite each other. One player throws the ball (works best with a football or basketball) and tries to get it to bounce off the curb and come back to them. Each player takes it in turns until they get the ball to come back to them. The first player that gets ten bounces off their curb wins and then they switch sides to do another round. NB This game should only be played in a safe, traffic-free area, well away from any busy roads!

STAY SAFE!
Remind your child that they need to keep some distance between themselves and their friends as they play.

What Time Is It Mr Wolf?

The classic outdoor game to keep kids entertained and on their toes. Choose one player to be Mr Wolf who stands at one end of the street or garden with their back to the rest of the players. The other players shout "What's the time, Mr Wolf?". Mr Wolf answers with a time (six o'clock, two o'clock etc.) The players then take that number of steps toward Mr Wolf. Whenever Mr Wolf decides someone is close enough to catch (without peeking), they shout "dinnertime" and chase the other players back to the start line. Traditionally the first player to be caught becomes Mr Wolf next, however for now why not choose the new Mr Wolf as the player who was last back to the starting line.

© Housing A Forest



Winter Bubbles

Who said this activity was just for summer fun? With this recipe you can add a little science and enjoy the beauty of blowing bubbles in winter...

Ingredients:

360ml of water
120ml of washing up liquid
60g of honey or golden syrup

What to do:

Mix all the ingredients together and use your bubble wands to blow some extra strong bubbles that will withstand the winter chill. The colder the day, the better! It takes some patience – but it's worth it to see them crystallise in the cold weather.



Forty-Forty

Another great game which combines hide & seek and tag and a firm favourite with kids! Whoever is 'it' chooses a home base – for example: a lamppost – and counts to 40 (without looking). The other players hide and their objective is to sneak up to the home base without being spotted by the player who is guarding it. If the guard spots them before they reach within 2 metres of the base, they are out of the game. It continues until the guard spots everyone or one lucky player sneaks past them to free all of those who are caught.

Torch Tag

Although the evenings are getting darker much earlier, it doesn't have to mean that the kids can't enjoy some fun at dusk before they're called in for the night. Whoever is 'it' flashes the light of a torch at the other players to 'catch' them. It's a fun game which combines tag and hide and seek with the added bonus of still being able to be done with social distancing.



YOUR BLUE PLANET

Unlike billions of other planets in the Milky Way, 71 per cent of Earth is covered by ocean. It's home to the greatest diversity of life on Earth but is our least explored habitat; we have better maps of Mars than of the ocean floor. Although there's still so much to learn, we do know that oceans power this Blue Planet, our only home, and if our oceans don't thrive, neither will we. There are many simple things that we can all do, every day, to help protect this wilderness beneath the waves...

POWERDOWN See if you can reduce your energy usage: next time you feel chilly, try layering up rather than turning up the heating. Switch off lights when you're not in a room and unplug electronics when you're not using them. These actions will use less energy, so there'll be less carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the air that makes Earth warmer.

THE LUNGS OF OUR PLANET Trees can take in CO₂ and breathe out oxygen. The more trees we plant, the more we can protect our planet from global warming.

BECOME A SEA-LIFE SPOTTER You can help scientists understand what's happening to wildlife populations. From bird-spotting to fish and mammal tracking, or counting different seaweeds found on the beach, together we can help gather new information.

PLASTIC IS NOT FANTASTIC Rubbish that's left on the ground can wash into drains, flush into the sea and be eaten by wildlife. And plastic can take hundreds of years to break down. That's why, all over the world, countries are beginning to ban single-use plastics such as carrier bags.

REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE Try reducing the amount of plastic you use by carrying a reusable water bottle and saying no to plastic straws. Rather than throwing things away, we can share with others, so that old toys and clothes can become new again. Those things that can't be reduced or reused can be carefully recycled. This keeps them out of landfill so they can be born again: cardboard boxes can become paper, fruit and vegetable peelings can be composted into soil.

Seen from space, Earth at night twinkles like the stars in the galaxy all around us. Today, the web of lights shines brighter, glowing where once it was dark, as our footprints extend across the planet. But with each new day, more of us are finding ways to tread lightly on our planet. Change begins in this way – like a ripple far out at sea that turns into a wave, growing bigger, and gathering power, as it thunders into shore.

We are at a unique stage in our history. Never before have we had such an awareness of what we are doing to the planet. And never before have we had the power to do something about that. Surely, we have a responsibility to care for our Blue Planet. The future, of humanity, and indeed all life on Earth, now depends on us.

– SIR DAVID ATTENBOROUGH



Edited excerpt from **Blue Planet II** by **Leisa Stewart-Sharpe**. Illustrations copyright © Emily Dove 2020. Puffin HB £14.99. With all the wonder, emotion and humour of the BBC TV series, discover how much there is to love about our Blue Planet – and how you can help look after it.



Bring Hope To A Child Living In Care During A Pandemic

BY DAVE LINTON

We are all currently living in an unsettling and challenging time. The COVID-19 pandemic is having a significant impact on us all – not least for those children and young people who are living within the care system. As a child I vividly remember looking out for those who seemed to be lonely with no friends, and as an adult I worked as a youth worker for over 20 years. Over the last few years I have moved on to wanting to raise the value, worth and dignity of children living in care across the UK, and now more than ever before they need our support.

Long before COVID-19 hit, there was already a significant pressure within children in care services. Nationwide, there was a serious lack of foster and adoptive families, inadequate services and a decrease in funding. According to a report by children's charity **Barnardo's** in June 2020, the number of children needing foster care had risen by 44 per cent at the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic and subsequently the number of people looking to become foster parents has plummeted by nearly half compared to the previous year. We know that this pandemic has increased pressure on vulnerable families, with job losses that deepen poverty all the more.

Moreover, the scar on mental health across the UK will have a lasting effect on many. There are more than 90,000 children in care across the UK. One child enters the UK care system every 15 minutes. In the wake of the pandemic, a new report has suggested that there are increasing amounts of mothers having their children taken into care.

Research by the **Women's Resource Centre**

noted a 50 per cent rise in children being referred to care homes during lockdown. This is why Barnardo's is claiming it is a 'state of emergency'. So, what can we do to help? My heart was broken when I found out that many children who move within the care system move all of their belongings in black bin bags or flimsy plastic shopping bags. This

created an idea for my luggage/bag business – making sure that no child carries their life in a bin bag. The concept is easy, someone buys a backpack or piece of luggage, a child in care receives one. While you may not be in a position to set up an ethical business like I did, there are many ways in which you can help. The obvious one is to make a financial donation to some of the great children's charities out there or offer your services in some way (very difficult with today's restrictions!). But if

you find yourself or your family are at the stage of thinking about fostering – now really is the time. They are crying out for people like you. Check out the Fostering Network or Home for Good for information in how to get the ball rolling. Avery Bowser from Action for Children's fostering service agrees that the need for foster carers is 'greater than ever', commenting, "Recent briefings

from the Department of Health have been clear that referrals for children in need, child protection registrations and the number of children in care are all higher. There are currently 75 more children in care than this last time last year, in a system that was already struggling to find enough foster families. We see that in the demand for our services. If you've been thinking about fostering, now

"These children are not bad kids, they are traumatised, they've been through more than you can imagine and they need to know that they matter and society cares for them."

is the time to talk to us about how you can provide a sense of home and family for a child. All kinds of people can foster – you only have to be over 21 years old and have the time and space in your home and your life." Children in care are incredible. They have huge value and worth and they deserve to be treated with dignity. These children are not bad kids, they are traumatised, they've been through more than you can imagine and they need to know that they matter and society cares for them. Who knows what the rest of the year will be like for us all, but spare a thought today for those children and young people as they move into or around the care system and ask yourself how could I bring a little bit of light into their lives?

About The Author

Dave Linton is an innovator, social entrepreneur, thought leader, mentor of social enterprises, motivational speaker and the founder and Managing Director of multi award-winning Madlug C.I.C which won the social enterprise UK consumer facing award in 2018. Prior to beginning his journey with Madlug, Dave was a youth worker for over 20 years and for the past three years he has also become heavily involved in mentoring and raising awareness of social enterprises. Dave is extremely passionate about using Madlug to influence a new young generation of social entrepreneurs.



Room for more



Start your fostering
journey with us



Sadly, there are children who are unable to live with their families, even with substantial support. Action for Children's fostering service operates across Northern Ireland with a strong track record in providing stable, long-term homes for children and young people.

The number of children in care is rising. And we anticipate an even greater need as a result of the pandemic. We're always on the lookout for people who would like to start their fostering journey with us, whether it's providing a long or short-term placement, or supporting a parent and child together.

At Action for Children, we believe that every child should have a safe and happy childhood, and the foundations they need to thrive. Our mission is to protect and support children by providing practical and emotional care and support, ensuring their voices are heard, and campaigning to bring lasting improvements to their lives.

Contact our friendly Fostering Team today:

028 9046 0500 fostercareni@actionforchildren.org.uk

actionforchildren.org.uk/how-we-can-help/foster-with-us/

 @AFCNIFostercare

CRAFTY KIDS:

Winter Warmers

There is nothing sweeter than ending a wondrous winter walk with a delicious hot chocolate oozing over with marshmallows and cream. Make it extra special by creating a cute cosy cover-up for your favourite family mugs!

Cinnamon Hot Chocolate

Serves 1



This sumptuous hot chocolate recipe is a warming hug in a mug.

Ingredients

1 tbsp cocoa powder
1 tbsp sugar
¼ tsp ground cinnamon
½ tsp vanilla extract
2 tbsp and 180 ml milk
(dairy or nut)

Method

Mix together the cocoa powder, sugar, cinnamon, vanilla and 2 tbsp of milk in a mug. Use a fork or a mini whisk until the mixture resembles a thick syrup. Over a medium heat, warm the rest of the milk until it begins to bubble, then pour it into the mug with the chocolate syrup and stir thoroughly. For added indulgence, serve with a dollop of cream or marshmallows and a sprinkle of cinnamon.

To serve (optional)

Cream
Marshmallows
Cinnamon



Mug Cosy

Make your favourite mug a smart little jacket for winter – not only will it look very fetching but it will keep your hot chocolate steaming that little bit longer. It's also a genius way to upcycle a woolly sock!

What you'll need

Mug	Fabric glue (optional)
Ruler	Optional extras: buttons, felt shapes, mini pom-poms, sequins
Woolly sock	
Scissors	
Needle and thread	



Instructions

1



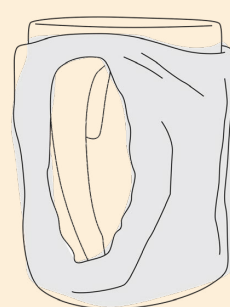
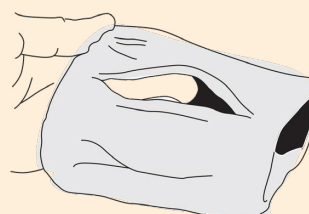
Choose your favourite mug and measure its height.

2



Cut the sock at the ankle and keep the top section. Turn the top section of the sock inside out and hem the seams securely with the thread.

3



Turn the sock the right side out and carefully cut a slit for the mug handle. Overstitch the edges or use the fabric glue to prevent fraying. If using glue, be sparing so it will dry clear, and leave to dry for the time it suggests on the packet. Then fit your cosy over the mug.

Recipe, craft idea and images courtesy of **Cottagecore - Inspirational Ideas, Crafts and Recipes for Wholesome Country Living** by Daisy Oakley is published by Summersdale. HB, £12.99 – out now.



COFFEE & CATCH-UP

A chef, TV presenter, a CEO and author. That's a dream CV for any ambitious person, but to achieve all this at 12-years-old is out of this world! No, this isn't the plot of an imaginative kids' book, this is precisely what youngster, **Omari McQueen** has managed to do. This November will see the airing of the first episode in his new cooking show *What's Cooking Omari?* and will follow the schoolboy and his family as he reveals just how tasty and easy it is to make healthy, vegan food that people of all ages can enjoy!

The series will provide a sneaky peak into this funny and supportive family's life, providing a window into his home with his mum, dad, older brother, Laquarn (14) and his younger siblings, Mahkai (10), Kiara (8), Jaylen and Kainon (7). Whilst Omari cooks one of his fabulous unique meals, he teaches one of his five siblings the tricks of his chef-y trade and he reveals fun and informative facts about the ingredients he is using. Omari was spurred on to create vegan recipes because he didn't like how animals had been treated for food and clothes. From that empathy, he started to research veganism and began to create his own recipes for his YouTube channel which has led to multiple opportunities. He can now boast to being the youngest award-winning chef in the UK as well as being CEO and Founder of 'Dipalicious' which has released a selection of dips, snacks, juice packs and seasonings! Omari is certainly not your average 12-year-old and Ni4kids was delighted to get the chance to (virtually) catch-up with him ahead of the airing of the first episode of his new show...

INTERVIEW BY ELIZABETH MCGIVERN

Q) Describe yourself in only five words?

I would describe myself as being creative, adventurous, kind, loving and fun. I love trying out new things, I love animals, my mission is to bring people together through food without harming animals and I love being around my family. I'm also really good at sports so you can add sporty too.

"Cooking is a lot of experiments and I love the idea of being a scientist in the kitchen. It's like being Einstein at home."

Q) How did your love of cooking get started? Did it come from your parents or was this something you picked up on your own?

I started cooking when I was seven years old when my mum got sick with migraines. My dad decided to teach my brother and I how to cook. I never saw it as a chore, I loved it. I loved seeing my parents proud of me and enjoying the food I had cooked, but the best part of all was when I realised that cooking is a lot of experiments and I love the idea of being a scientist in the kitchen. It's like being Einstein at home, it's a place where you can make mistakes and keep trying until you get it right. Being dyslexic at school I was made to feel silly, but in the kitchen I felt free. Now I know my mum was telling the truth: I can do anything I practice at.

Q) What's your favourite dish to cook?

I have a few but my BBQ jackfruit wrap is my go-to favourite. It tastes so delicious you will have to get my book that's coming out in January called *Omari McQueen Best Bites* and try it out, then you will fully understand the joys of a jackfruit wrap.



Q) For kids who are interested in learning to cook, what's a good (and easy) recipe you would recommend for them to start with?

I would say the easiest recipes are smoothies to start off with mixing different flavours but I would recommend learning to make soups first and find out what flavours you like together. Surprising your parents with a nice soup in the winter is the best, you will definitely be the favourite child that day – especially if they have had a hard day.

What can people expect when they tune in?

People can expect a lot of laughs and new, healthy and delicious ways of cooking vegan food. They will learn a bit about my family and healthy tips on some ingredients.

What was your favourite part of filming?

My favourite part of filming was having my siblings with me, cooking and learning new things with the production team while teaching them about vegan

Omari with Jaylon, Kiara and Mum



cooking. I also love playing basketball on my breaks with the cameraman and being given the opportunity to show everyone my love for food and that you

Q) Tell us about your show?

My show is full of fun with my crazy and amazing family. A range of delicious plant-based food that you can try out with the family. There's something for everyone to enjoy. It's plant-based food made cool!

can eat plant-based food and still be healthy, cool and most of all full.

What's Cooking Omari? kicks off Sunday 15 November at 9:30am on the CBBC channel.

THE ULTIMATE PARENT PEP TALK

EMBRACE AMAZING

It can feel slightly overwhelming to decide to change your life, but you are already amazing in so many ways – you probably just don't realize it yet. To be amazing can often simply be a matter of recognizing what already exists in your life and then building on those elements. Think about what makes you special and different and look at ways to expand these parts of your personality. It is also helpful to discover and address any less-than helpful habits that will get in your way. You are the author of your own life, so get ready to create a really special happy ending for yourself while keeping hold of everything that is already amazing in your life.

DON'T GO CHASING UNICORNS

You might have fallen into the trap of thinking that to be amazing is to be perfect, but I've got some news for you: nothing and no one is ever perfect. Perfection doesn't really exist and the desire to live a perfect life can actually be a very negative one. You can waste a lot of your energy chasing perfection because it's a goal that you will never reach – and it could potentially make you very unhappy and unhealthy if you keep trying to get to something that doesn't exist. Release yourself from the myth that you need to be perfect and start to look at what will really make you happy.

TRY NOT TO COMPARE

It is one thing to be inspired by those around you and another to compare yourself with others. For a start, you will never know what is happening behind the scenes with any individual and how many

struggles and false starts they have overcome to get where they are. And also, so what? You are your own person, with your own goals, life and journey, so don't compare how far you've come and where you are going with anyone else. If there is a particular individual who has a negative influence on your mood, try to limit your interaction with them. Mute them in your social media channels and try to avoid them socially if you can. Think about what it is that is making you compare yourself with them. Do they seem more successful or happier than you? Can you figure out why you are feeling this way? Don't forget there is plenty of success to go around, and just because one individual seems to have a cupful it doesn't mean there isn't enough left for you. Don't waste energy thinking badly of them or yourself, instead focus on how you can reach your goals.

EMBRACE WHO YOU ARE

You are great. No, really, you are! And if you want to live an amazing life, you need to start believing it. You may feel that you have faults, but this shouldn't stop you from embracing yourself exactly as you are. Just because you're trying to become a better person, it doesn't mean you're not a great individual right now. It's really important

Being amazing doesn't mean having a so-called flawless body, a brilliant career or a picture-perfect relationship. The fact is, there is nobody quite like you, and this alone is absolutely remarkable. Being amazing is really just being the best version of yourself you can be and living a life full of kindness and positivity. Read on as journalist and mum-of-two **Debbi Marco** reveals how we can cast off self-doubt, embrace our inner brilliance and learn to truly love ourselves as after all, a happy parent equals happy kids...



to accept and love yourself because, to move forward and grow as individual, you need a steady and safe platform much like the foundations of a building. You need to work on making these foundations as strong as possible and figure out all the reasons you are great. Maybe you volunteer for a charity each month, or you always make the tea at work or bring a friend flowers if they are feeling down. Think of all the things that make you unique

and celebrate them. Once you've got those established, only then can you start to move forward and make improvements.

YOU'VE GOT THIS

You can handle anything life throws at you as long as you have the right attitude. If you view each up and down as an opportunity to learn and grow, you'll soon find that you are moving forward at a great pace in the direction that will lead you toward your goals. You are shaped by the things that happen to you in life, but you can decide if they knock you down or lift you up.

Edited excerpt
from **You're
Amazing** by
Debbi Marco,
out now.
Published by
Summersdale,
PB £9.99.



NOM NOM NOMASTE

This November is World Vegan Month and therefore the perfect time to embrace exciting, delicious and oh-so-good-for-us plant-based nosh and nurture a healthy, positive attitude toward food for life.



This hearty vegetable stew is the ultimate comfort food and is perfect served with crusty sourdough and a leafy green salad. Slow cook it to encourage the flavours to really emerge.

INGREDIENTS *Serves: Four*

- 2–3 onions, peeled and roughly chopped into large chunks
- 2 courgettes, chopped into chunks
- 2 peppers (ideally one red, one yellow, but any colour is fine), chopped into chunks
- 1 aubergine, chopped into chunks
- 4–6 cloves garlic
- 4 vine-ripened tomatoes, cored, peeled and chopped, or 1 tin chopped tomatoes
- 1 tbsp tomato purée
- 3 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp paprika
- 2 tsp thyme
- 1 tsp oregano
- ½ tsp rosemary
- Generous handful fresh basil leaves
- Sea salt and black pepper, to taste
- Fresh herbs to garnish, such as parsley, basil and rosemary
- 1 lemon, quartered

NOMASTE
*a respectful prayer of
thanks for delicious,
nutritious and just plain
yummy food*

METHOD

Place all ingredients except for the fresh herbs and lemon in a slow cooker or oven dish. Turn your slow cooker to low, or your oven to 90°C. Cook for 6–8 hours. Remove from slow cooker or oven, garnish with fresh herbs and serve with lemon quarters to squeeze over. Many recipes will ask you to fry the onion, aubergine, courgette and garlic first, or roast the ratatouille for a much shorter time, but I find this slow-cook version allows all the flavours to really come into their own. It is also gratifyingly simple and satisfying. You can put it on in the morning and it'll be ready when you get home!

VARIATIONS

You could add 8 medium potatoes, halved (no need to remove the skins) to the dish, for a single pot dinner. Some people thinly slice the vegetables into discs and arrange them in a ring around the edge of their oven dish, which looks spectacular. I personally love the rustic simplicity, look and texture of large chunks, but thin slices melt in the mouth and look great for a fine dining presentation. You and your guests will love it either way.

RATATOUILLE

BEETROOT BURGERS WITH GUAC

Try these beetroot and quinoa burgers for a healthy and delicious twist on a classic – it's far easier and faster than you might think.



INGREDIENTS *Makes: 8 burgers*

1 medium red onion	150 g breadcrumbs
1 red pepper	1 tsp chilli flakes
oil for frying	1 tsp chilli powder
4 cloves of garlic, minced	½ tsp smoked paprika
1 large bunch of coriander	1 tbsp tapioca flour
½ can black beans, drained and rinsed	charcoal bun, pitta or other roll
1 beetroot, finely grated	salad leaves
175 g cooked quinoa (made according to the package instructions)	guacamole

METHOD

Peel and finely chop the onion. Remove the stem and seeds from the pepper and finely chop. Cook in a little oil for around 8 minutes – until the vegetables become less wet. Add the garlic and chopped coriander and cook for a further 1–2 minutes. In your food processor, process half the black beans on a medium speed to form a dough. In a large bowl, add the processed and unprocessed beans, beetroot, quinoa, breadcrumbs, cooked vegetables and spices. Mix well so that the ingredients are evenly distributed. Form the mixture into small patties – it will be sticky and thick at this point. Over a medium heat, preheat a little oil in a frying pan, then fry the patties, turning halfway through. Drain on kitchen paper before serving in a serving in a charcoal bun or burger roll of your choice, with salad leaves and plenty of fresh guacamole.

INGREDIENTS *Serves: Four*

2 small ripe avocados	Pinch salt
80 ml non-dairy milk – soya or almond work well	2 tsp vanilla extract
4 tbsp maple syrup	25 g cocoa powder
1 tbsp almond butter	175 g chocolate for melting, such as chocolate chips or baking chocolate
1 tbsp arrowroot	

METHOD

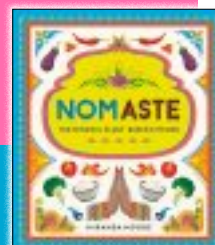
Chop the avocado into your food processor, then add all the ingredients except the chocolate. Blitz until smooth. In a heatproof bowl, melt the chocolate over a pan of water on a medium heat. Once melted, add the chocolate to the mixture and blitz again until well combined. Transfer the mixture to ramekins or glasses, smooth it over and chill in the freezer until fully set – at least 2 hours. Before serving, get out of the freezer and leave to soften for 5 minutes or so. Top with chopped hazelnuts and sliced strawberries, or your favourite toppings. If there's any left over, store, covered, in the freezer.

Note: Silken tofu can be used in place of avocados, if you prefer.

CHOCOLATE AVOCADO MOUSSE

Avocados? In a dessert? Yes! Full of good fats, avocados are perfect for creamy, mousse-like desserts (or indeed, mousse) and pair really well with chocolate.

Recipes and images courtesy of **Nomaste: The Mindful Plant-Based Kitchen** by Miranda Moore. HB out now RRP £14.99



Amazing Health Benefits You May Not Know About Vitamin D

Vitamin D is all over the news at the moment, with medical studies taking place worldwide to determine the extent of its effect on Covid-19 patients. Whether it can ease symptoms of the virus or not, following a recent survey that highlighted how one in five of us in the UK and Ireland are deficient in vitamin D, **Simon Bandy** from natural health specialists **Veganicity** gives us his top 10 reasons why we really should be stocking up on the 'sunshine vitamin' this winter...

1. It can assist in reducing depression.

There's no doubt that 2020 has been a tough year for all, and medical experts are now expecting mental health issues to increase significantly, knowing that we will continue to see the effects of COVID-19 for a long time into the future. Vitamin D can play a vital role in regulating our mood and warding off depression so, as the darker, longer days creep in over winter, it's the perfect time to dose up.

2. It can help boost weight loss. It's thought that the extra calcium the body gets from taking vitamin D supplements can have an appetite-suppressing effect – handy given that two in three admitted they piled on the pounds during the first stages of lockdown.



Mushrooms are the only vegetarian food that can make vitamin D as they contain a specific compound called ergosterol.

3. It can benefit those bones.

Vitamin D ensures the body can absorb calcium, potassium and magnesium, all of which help to keep bones and teeth strong and help prevent osteoporosis – a disease that affects over 3 million people in the UK.

4. It can help support lung function and reduce respiratory illnesses.

While there are still various medical trials being undertaken around the world, especially given the current pandemic and its effects on the respiratory symptom, many researchers have already shown that having low levels of vitamin D in the body correlates with illnesses such as bronchitis and asthma, and symptoms including wheezing and chest tightness.

5. It can help regulate the body's insulin levels.

According to Diabetes.co.uk, Vitamin D is believed to help improve the body's sensitivity to insulin – the hormone responsible for regulating blood sugar levels – and thus reduce the risk of insulin resistance, which is often a precursor to type 2 diabetes, something that affects one in ten people over 40 in the UK.

6. It can help promote a healthy pregnancy.

Vitamin D is especially important in pregnancy as it helps your baby's bones, teeth, kidneys, heart and nervous system to develop. Furthermore, some studies suggest that pregnant women who have a vitamin D deficiency may have a higher risk of developing preeclampsia and giving birth preterm.

7. It can help prevent falls. While Vitamin D is essential for bone development, many people don't know that it can improve muscle strength and neural functionality too, thus reducing the risk of falls. This can be particularly beneficial for the older generation who are frailer and more susceptible to fractures.

8. It could reduce the risk of getting cancer. While the UK medical profession is still sceptical about this claim, a study in Japan did show that higher levels of vitamin D in the blood are linked to a lower risk of cancer, especially liver cancer.



9. It can help us avoid catching the common cold or flu.

Another study suggested that taking vitamin D supplements could reduce the chances of catching seasonal flu as one of the vitamin's most important roles is keeping your immune system strong so you're able to fight off the viruses and bacteria that cause illness.

10. It can give you a boost of energy.

Constantly feeling tired, especially during the winter months, is one of the leading symptoms of a vitamin D deficiency, however, it is often overlooked as a cause. Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is thought to affect over 2 million people in the UK, yet vitamin D supplements are an easy and inexpensive way of reducing symptoms.

We get most of our vitamin D from sunlight on our skin and from certain foods. Given that most of us will spend a lot more time indoors now the weather is turning colder for winter, people really should be making sure they get enough of this vital vitamin. From October to early March in the UK, we simply cannot get enough vitamin D from sunlight. While it is found in some foods such as oily fish, red meat, eggs and some fortified spreads and cereals, vegetarians and vegans are particularly at risk from vitamin D deficiency as these foods don't form part of their diet. The dosage everyone should take will depend on their age, skin colour, descent and living conditions, but the average for those over one year old is 10 micrograms a day. You should always check with your doctor if you are unsure or think you have a severe deficiency.

STYLE COUNSEL

WINTER COLLECTION

WITH STEPHANIE BERKELEY



Finally, the end is in sight... maybe not of lockdown but certainly of 2020, a year that introduced us to new phrases – COVID-19, social distancing, furlough and new technology – Zoom call anyone?

Anyway, this entire year could easily have been an episode of “Black Mirror” or one of Roald Dahl’s “Tales of the Unexpected” (throwback to all those 70s kids out there). 2020 has brought natural disasters and a global pandemic so, unlike previous years when pundits line up at this time to share their predictions for what 2021 may bring, they seem to have gone rather quiet – I mean, who would dare to predict the year ahead when you could never have predicted this one? I’m not saying this is the worst year in history as there are several strong contenders for this title. They include 1845, the year the Irish potato famine started, 1918, the influenza pandemic that wiped out millions around the world, and 536 – a very bad year indeed – where a dense fog (supposedly caused by a volcanic eruption) plunged half the world into total darkness, 24/7 for 18 months. That year, snow fell in summer, crops failed, people starved and a few years later a massive plague erupted that would lead to the collapse of the Roman Empire. So, as Monty Python says – always look on the bright side of life – it’s not that bad ... yet. And there’s always Christmas... I appreciate that lockdown restrictions are ‘fluid’ to say the least, but we do need to be aware that work dos may not happen, family gatherings may be restricted by numbers and your Christmas parties may take place in an outdoor-heated location or over FaceTime.



Feather PJS, from £40, River Island

One thing I am certain of is that Christmas festivities require sequins, feathers and fabulosity, regardless of how many people you’ll be able to show off to in person. Even Zoom parties wouldn’t be complete without a great necklace or added sparkle. You’re probably

not going need a brand-new party dress this December, so why not recycle an old one? If you spend an evening sifting through your wardrobe deciding which festive fashion choices are worth another ‘outing’ and which aren’t, you can then list the rejects on Depop or eBay. And with the money you could treat yourself to something that you’ll really use this Christmas... luxury loungewear! I’ll admit, I’ve never been a massive fan in the past but this year, I would totally recommend throwing most of your budget at some luxe jammies or loungewear. These won’t be a ‘one off’ statement look, unlike the £200 sequin jumpsuit you just had to have three years ago (just me?). Investing in something stylish and comfortable that you can wear again and again will bring the cost per wear



Cameron Diaz in The Holiday image © Sony Pictures

down and ensure that you are relaxed and comfortable as you curl up to watch The Holiday for the umpteenth time on Netflix. Before the fashion pack caught on to the Scandi term hygge, the pinnacle of cosy loungewear was defined by Cameron Diaz’s wardrobe in this movie. Her character, Amanda Woods, is dressed in country cottage-inspired outfits throughout that involve loads of cashmere and soft, neutral hues. Fourteen years later, these comfy-chic ensembles hold a new appeal for us this holiday season. Of course this is no time to let standards slip so dress it up for your festive Zoom events by adding a pair of earrings and a slick of red lipstick. Or, alternatively, if you want to embrace festive fashion without actually wearing it yourself, Christmas pjs just happen to make the perfect present to gift your loved ones.



Cashmere Jumper, £169, The White Company



Personalised Satin PJS, £50, HA Designs

What we do know so far about Christmas 2020 is that we know nothing but that’s no reason not to give it your ALL this year. If there is one thing that we have learnt from the past year, it’s that we are flexible, we are resilient and we are creative. So, let’s celebrate that this year.

- Let’s focus on giving to others, those we know and those we don’t.
- Let’s support our local businesses when we are buying gifts this year as we want them to still be around when this is all over.
- Let’s support our local farmers and growers as they are key workers, toiling long hours to ensure we have the best spuds for our roasties, the best turkey for the Christmas feast and the best beverages to enjoy on a cold winter’s evening. Visit nigoodfood.com/producers

What I have also seen a lot of is a perverse sort of pride about living through this year. Some real stars have emerged including Captain Sir Tom Moore, Joe Wicks and Marcus Rashford and it’s been a pretty good year for memes (especially with the recent US election) and there’s the overall feeling that if we get out of 2020 alive, we’ll all have a great story to tell our grandchildren... Roll on 2021!

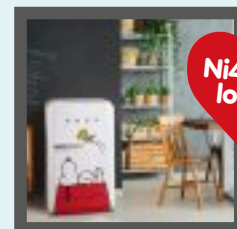
Follow Stephanie on Instagram - Bladonbabe

Stephanie x

The Beauty of Gordons is the Price!



NEW ARRIVALS



Ni4kids loves

This is probably the one and only year we have ever wanted to put a kitchen appliance on our Christmas wish list. Iconic, Italian brand Smeg has teamed up with the group behind Snoopy to create a limited edition FAB10 Fridge to commemorate the much-loved character from Charles M. Schulz’s popular Snoopy comic strip, Peanuts, on his 70th anniversary. There are only 25 available in the entire UK, and with a £1,299 price tag we’re not really expecting to find one under our tree come Christmas Day, but just like Snoopy when snoozing we can always dream.



POP some joy into their wardrobe this winter as Scandi brand Polarn O. Pyret launches its truly joyful festive collection bursting with partywear, cosy PJs, seasonal knitwear and the latest designs from the much-loved, limited-edition Disney collaboration. The Christmas collection also includes a mix of smart shirts and delightful dresses to help celebrate special days in style. What we love most about this hero kids brand though is the quality never fades, even after countless washes, making it perfect for sharing the love with siblings, friends and family. Find the range online at polarnopyret.co.uk



Meet the Bendies, (£8.99 from sweetdreamers.co.uk) a fun collection of character pouches containing two reusable silicone straws for little ones to use time and time again. Made from food grade silicone, Bendies straws are odourless, 100% safe and can be used for hot and cold drinks alike. Coming in a handy zip up pouch, Bendies have an attachable strap so they can be secured to school bags, backpacks or even around your wrist, so they are perfect for drinking on the go! Best of all, for every pack of straws sold, Bendies will donate a percentage of the profit towards The Ocean Clean Up.

This issue we are loving...

GIFTS THAT GIVE BACK

In the year that saw fundraising opportunities for charities plummet in the face of lockdown, this Christmas more than any other is a chance to show some support by giving gifts that will aid and donate to a good cause. Human rights organisation Amnesty International has teamed up with New Internationalist

to bring you the amnestyshop.org.uk for Christmas 2020 to help good causes around the globe. The majority of products are organic, recycled, fair-trade or educational, along with a selection of Amnesty-branded gifts and treats. We love this set of four **Olive Oil Soaps** in plain, lemon, sage and pomegranate, handmade by a women's fair-trade organisation in the West Bank city of Nablus, Palestine, prepared in the traditional way, using virgin olive oil and natural ingredients that are typical to the region.

LET IT GLOW

As the season changes, so do our skin's needs and that means boosting our beauty routine with products that lock in more moisture and stop our skin drying out. All hail the cult beauty brand Cosrx and their **Advanced Snail 96 Mucin Power Essence** (£24/100ml at beautybay.com) a glow-giving skincare essential enriched with 96% Snail Secretion Filtrate, a wonder K-Beauty ingredient that helps to protect the skin from moisture loss. The ultra-hydrating treatment, it replenishes and revitalises dry damaged skin, whilst providing anti-ageing benefits to help minimise the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles. The result? A smoother, radiant complexion with increased elasticity. Vegan and hypoallergenic – this is definitely one for your Xmas wish list.



HELPING HANDS

A gorgeous Christmas gifting idea is this oh-so-cute **Hand Care Tin from Childs Farm** (RRP £15). With the festive season comes colder weather so it's important to keep little (and big!) hands nourished and hydrated to prevent dry, cracked skin. This beautiful floral tin contains a luxuriously moisturising grapefruit & organic tea tree hand wash, a fast absorbing, ultra-hydrating grapefruit & organic tea tree hand cream and, for the ultimate treat for your nails, a file, buff, smooth and shine nail block. The tin can then be reused to store anything from hair ties, photos, jewellery, pocket money or other little knick-knacks!



CHRISTMAS DONE EASY

You better watch out, you better not cry, you better not pout, I'm telling you why...because **Gordons Chemists** is giving you a basketful of the best holiday treasures this yuletide season, with even bigger and better savings than ever before! Renowned for their exceptional festive fragrance offers Paco Rabanne 1 Million 50ml EDT Set is just £50.00, saving a MASSIVE £28.40! DKNY's Fresh Blossom Set is HALF PRICE (only £19.99) with a FREE Bag, a great stocking filler! The Profusion Beauty Chest 52-piece Make-Up Kit is a great essential beauty buy at only £15! Treat yourself, or your friends, with the White to Brown Dazzle Set for as little at £12.95! And don't forget about that special man in your life! Get him something he will love for less, such as the L'Oréal Men Expert Alive & Kicking Set for only £9.99. Take the stress out of your Xmas shopping this year. Keep up to date on weekly offers at facebook.com/gordonschemists and for more amazing offers, pick up the Christmas Gift Guide in store or view it [here](#)



Ask the Pharmacist COVID-19 Pharmacy Update

Richard Dunn is a community pharmacist with Gordons Chemists.

As the second wave of COVID-19 is upon us, we are seeing another upsurge in patients presenting at community pharmacies across NI. We would again urge the public to recognise the pressures on pharmacy and to work with any arrangements pharmacies and GP practices have introduced in order to deal with this surge. With this in mind I would like to highlight the following on behalf of community pharmacy:

- Follow the latest guidance on self-isolating, social distancing, wearing of face coverings, cleaning and testing – visit hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/covid-19-information-public
- If you need further information or advice contact NHS on 111 – they will help you decide if you need to contact your GP. Calling your GP directly is only necessary if you have an existing health condition, problems with your immune system or are experiencing very serious symptoms and are unable to cope.
- If you should be isolating, please do not call into your pharmacy; rather ask friends or family to call at the pharmacy on your behalf.
- When visiting your pharmacy, wear a face covering and disinfect your hands on entry – this will help protect you and others, including pharmacy staff.
- During the initial wave pharmacy suspended most of the services offered by

community pharmacy. We have since been able to restart several of these, including the Minor Ailments Service, Smoking Cessation Service and Pharmacy First Service (for sore throats and common cold). Your pharmacy also has the option to provide remote consultations over the telephone for those unable to attend the pharmacy.

- Vaccination against the Flu is now more important than ever in order to minimise the pressure on the health service over the winter months. While flu alone can be life threatening, co-infection with COVID-19 will increase mortality twofold compared to COVID-19 infection alone. Many pharmacies across the region now provide the flu vaccination service. This can be a private service (fee to pay) for those who do not qualify for free NHS vaccination – or a commissioned service (free) for health and social care workers. Flu vaccine stock is in limited supply so best to contact the pharmacy before you visit.

- Only order prescriptions for the medication you need – there is no need to stockpile as it could disadvantage other patients.
- Extra supplies should not be ordered – the doctor will not prescribe more than the normal 28 or 56 days' supply.
- It could take 48 hours for prescriptions to be generated by your GP – and it could take the same again (or more) for pharmacy teams to safely dispense your medication. The pharmacy will provide you with an estimate of how long it will take – please be patient.
- Social distancing is essential in preventing the spread of COVID-19. When leaving in a prescription to your pharmacy, please do not wait in the pharmacy but call back at the time indicated. If queuing to pay for goods, please keep more than two metre distance between you and others customers. Most pharmacies will have markings on the floor to indicate this. Please stay safe.

Gordons Chemists is the largest independently owned retail pharmacy chain in Northern Ireland. Established in 1980, Gordons Chemists now has 61 pharmacies on the high street and in shopping centres across Northern Ireland and Scotland. Products described are available at most pharmacies and Gordons Chemists does not endorse any individual product. Always consult your pharmacist in relation to your individual symptoms.



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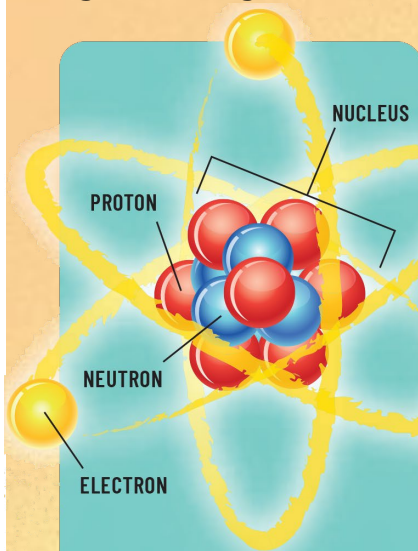
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Learning 4 Fun: THE MIGHTY ATOM

By Bill Bryson



THE ATOM

Every atom is made from three kinds of particle:

- protons, which have a positive electrical charge;
- electrons, which have a negative electrical charge;
- and neutrons, which have no charge.

Protons and neutrons are packed into the centre, or nucleus, of the atom while electrons spin around the outside.

Atoms are tiny – very tiny indeed. Half a million of them lined up shoulder to shoulder could hide behind a human hair.

THE SIZE OF AN ATOM

An individual atom is really impossible to imagine, but let's try:

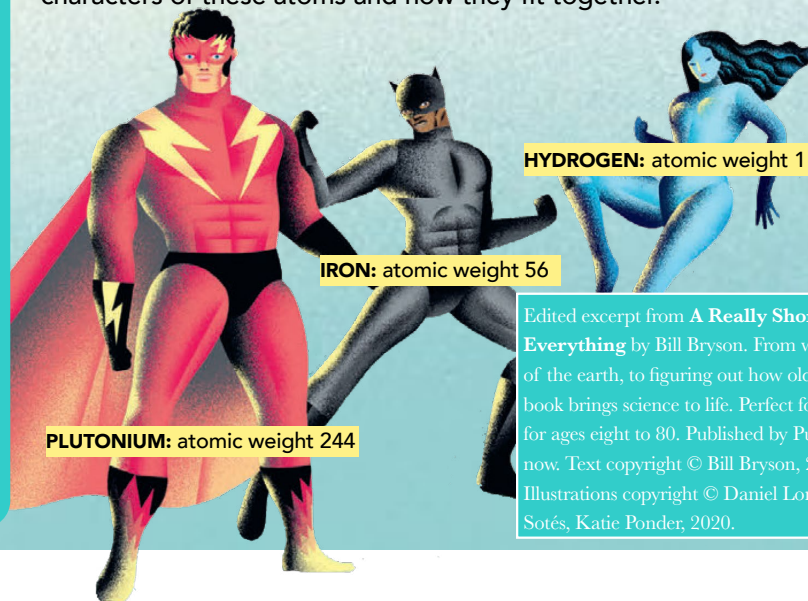
1. Start with a millimetre, which is a line this long: -
2. Now imagine that line divided into 1,000 equal lengths. (Each of these lengths is a micron.)
3. Divide each micron into 10,000 smaller lengths.
4. You have found the size of an atom: one ten-millionth of a millimetre.

NUMBERS BEYOND BELIEF

Atoms are present in numbers that you really cannot conceive. At sea level, at freezing point, one cubic centimetre of air – a space about the size of a sugar cube – will contain 27 million billion molecules. (A molecule is simply two or more atoms working together.) Think how many cubic centimetres it would take to make a universe!

WEIGHING THE ATOM

The realization that atoms are three things – small, numerous and practically indestructible – and that all things are made from them, was taken up by an Englishman named John Dalton. Dalton was born in 1766. He was so exceptionally bright that at the young age of 12 he was put in charge of the local Quaker school. (We know from his diaries that at about this time he was reading Newton's *Principia* – in the original Latin.) Still in his 20s, he was one of the earliest scientists to suggest that all matter was made up of exceedingly tiny particles, or atoms. But his main contribution was to consider the relative sizes and characters of these atoms and how they fit together.

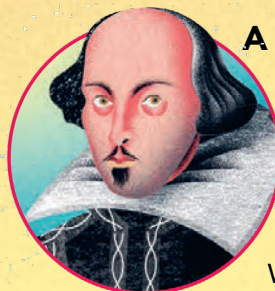


PLUTONIUM: atomic weight 244

IRON: atomic weight 56

HYDROGEN: atomic weight 1

The atom, the matter from which all things are made, is the basis of chemistry. Atoms are everywhere and everything is made of them. Even though it would take the great scientist Albert Einstein to prove mathematically once and for all that the atom existed, neither the idea of atoms nor the term itself was exactly new. Both had been developed by the ancient Greeks and investigated by many earlier scientists.



A TEENY BIT OF SHAKESPEARE

Not only do atoms live a very long time, they really get around. Every atom in your body has almost certainly passed through several stars and been part of millions of organisms on its way to becoming you.

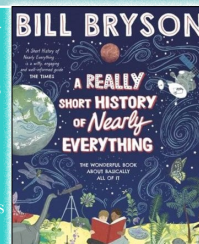
We each contain so many atoms and are so completely recycled at death that a significant

number of our atoms – up to a billion for each of us – probably once belonged to Shakespeare. A billion more may have come from Buddha and Genghis Khan and Beethoven, and any other historical figure you care to name. When we die, our atoms will break up and move off to find new uses elsewhere – as part of a leaf or drop of dew, or even another human being. Atoms go on practically for ever. Nobody actually knows how long an atom can survive, but it's probably billions of years.

THE LIGHTNESS SCALE

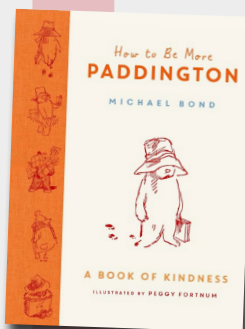
Dalton knew, for instance, that hydrogen was the lightest element, so he gave it what he called 'an atomic weight' of 1. He believed also that water consisted of seven parts of oxygen to one of hydrogen, and so he gave oxygen an atomic weight of 7. In this way, he was able to arrive at the relative weights of the known elements. He wasn't always terribly accurate – oxygen's atomic weight is actually 16, not 7 – but the principle was sound and formed the basis for all of modern chemistry and much of the rest of modern science.

Edited excerpt from *A Really Short History of Nearly Everything* by Bill Bryson. From working out the weight of the earth, to figuring out how old the dinosaurs are, this book brings science to life. Perfect for Christmas gifting for ages eight to 80. Published by Puffin, HB £20, out now. Text copyright © Bill Bryson, 2003, 2008, 2020. Illustrations copyright © Daniel Long, Dawn Cooper, Jesús Sotés, Katie Ponder, 2020.



The Reading Corner

Snuggle up tight with a wondrous new winter tale...



AGE 3+

How To Be More Paddington: A Book of Kindness by Michael Bond, HB £12.99, published by Harper Collins Children's Books

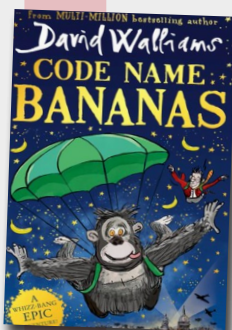
A timely gift book of inspirational quotes from the late Michael Bond's beloved Paddington, combined with Peggy Fortnum's original illustrations. For over 60 years, whatever the situation Paddington has always responded with kindness. From arriving in London and winning the hearts of the Brown family, to sharing elvenses with Mr Gruber and lending a paw around the neighbourhood, he tries to do his very best for others... even if there are a few well-intentioned mishaps along the way! We think we should all try and be a bit more Paddington this Christmas.



AGE 5+

The Puffin Keeper by Michael Morpurgo, illustrated by Benji Davies, HB £12.99, published by Puffin

This is the story of a life-changing friendship, a lost puffin and a lonely artist. It was Benjamin Postlethwaite's job all his long life to make sure the light shone brightly high up in the lighthouse on Puffin Island. Not once in all his years as the lighthouse keeper had he ever let his light go out. But sometimes even the brightest light on a lighthouse cannot save a ship... a beautiful tale that will enchant readers of all ages.



AGE 7+

Code Name Bananas by David Walliams, HB £14.99 published by Harper Collins Children's Books
In his latest book, Walliams invites readers to step back in time to London 1940. As bombs rain down on the city, orphan boy Eric forms an extraordinary friendship with a remarkable gorilla at London Zoo: Gertrude. When the zoo no longer becomes safe, Eric goes on the run with Gertrude and his zookeeper Uncle Sid, but while in hiding at the seaside they uncover a top-secret Nazi plot. Can they save the day? An epic new comedy adventure from the UK's biggest-selling children's author.



AGE 7+

The Ickabog by J.K. Rowling, HB £20, published by Little, Brown Books for Young Readers

The highly anticipated first non-Harry Potter children's story from Rowling was serialised online for free during lockdown to help entertain children during the Covid-19 pandemic. Written over 10 years ago as a bedtime story for her own children, the author was keen for children to be involved in its creation and ran a competition resulting in illustrations being featured in the book from 34 children aged 7-12 from the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and India – including two from Northern Ireland. In this brilliantly original fairy tale readers will discover a mythical monster, a kingdom in peril and an adventure that will test two children's bravery to the limit. A tale of hope and friendship to triumph against all odds from one of the world's best storytellers.



AGE 8+

Diary Of A Wimpy Kid: The Deep End by Jeff Kinney HB £12.99, published by Puffin

In the 15th book in the Wimpy Kid series by globally bestselling children's author Jeff Kinney, expect fun, laughter and escapism, as Greg Heffley and his family hit the road for a cross-country camping trip, ready for the adventure of a lifetime. But things take an unexpected turn and they find themselves stranded at an RV park that's not exactly a summertime paradise. When the skies open up and the water starts to rise, the Heffleys wonder if they can save their vacation – or if they're already in too deep.



AGE 8+

Frostheart 2: Escape From Aurora by Jamie Littler PB £7.99, published by Puffin

In this exciting sequel to the phenomenal best-selling debut, Frostheart, Ash and the rest of the Frostheart's brave crew have finally arrived at the majestic stronghold of Aurora. He can't wait to solve the next clue that will lead him to his parents. But it's quickly clear that even Aurora isn't safe for Song Weavers. When a vicious Wraith attack leaves Ash, Lunah, Rook and Tobu stranded on the ice, they will have to use all their strength and cunning to reach safety. But what they find is even more incredible...

WIN

A COPY OF YOUR MOOD JOURNAL BY BESTSELLING AUTHOR AND BROADCASTER FEARNE COTTON

Meet your moods in **Your Mood Journal**, a customisable activity book divided into seven colourful and fully-illustrated chapters, focusing on the different emotions of sadness, happiness, anger, loneliness, worry, fear and excitement.

Packed full of interactive exercises, practical tips, stickers for personalisation and notes from Fearne herself, this is the perfect toolkit to help children aged 7+ explore and understand their emotions, as well as build confidence in communicating feelings. Designed to encourage healthy mental wellbeing in a fun and creative way, there's lots of space to write, draw, express and learn inside. With its engaging, cheerful content we think this handy little must-have is an ideal companion book to help kids figure out their feelings and therefore understand how to manage them.

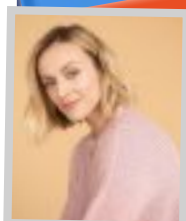
We have five copies of this perfect Christmas gift to give away, so to be in with a chance to win go to ni4kids.com/competitions and answer this question:

Q) THE SURNAME OF THE AUTHOR OF YOUR MOOD JOURNAL IS...?

A) COTTON B) SILK OR C) WOOL

Dream big, Read Puffin. Visit puffin.co.uk/DreamBig #PuffinDreamer

T&Cs: Competition closing date: Friday 11 December 2020. Editor's decision is final. No cash alternative. Due to the current Covid-19 climate, physical prizes may take longer to fulfil. For full T&C's visit ni4kids.com/competitions





NB Booking in advance is required for most venues and numbers will be limited in order to comply with social distancing protocols.

Festive Family Fun

Explore Belfast City Centre safely this festive season and take on the challenge of spotting the colourful gingerbread house-themed Christmas props in the windows of local businesses on Belfast One's magical free outdoor Christmas Trail. Suitable for the whole family, the trail will run from Fri 11 Dec – Sun 3 Jan. Download the BTOne App and make your way around the City, being sure to keep your eyes open so you don't miss the candy canes and gingerbread characters! Find all 10 props by answering a question at each location point for your chance to WIN a £250 Belfast City Centre Gift Card! By following the map, families will uncover magical fairy houses along the way before discovering three special Santa Post boxes, where children can send their own letter to the North Pole – and receive a reply from Santa! Head into Starbucks stores at CastleCourt, Victoria Square or Castle Lane and tell staff you're taking part in this magnificent trail to claim your golden chocolate coin (while stocks last!). Visit belfastone.co.uk



Out-Of-This-World Illuminations

They are more used to searching for bright lights in the sky, but this month Armagh Observatory and Planetarium will shine the spotlight on its historic grounds for an illuminating outdoor family event. Space Lights is a new spectacular outdoor light show running on selected dates from Thu Nov 26 to Sun Dec 6. The grounds will be transformed into a magical world of sound and light including space themed sculptures which will provide an out-of-this-world backdrop for the perfect 'Insta' moment. To find out more about upcoming events at Armagh Observatory & Planetarium visit <https://armagh.space/>



to win fabulous prizes, sing seasonal favourites together, and hear about the children's charity's work, all from the comfort of your own home. Register FREE by clicking [here](#)

Kidsmas Live

Join Barnardo's President, broadcaster Natasha Kaplinsky and special celebrity supporters on Tue 1 Dec at 6.30pm for a virtual, fun-filled festive hour for all the family to raise vital funds for vulnerable children and young people across the UK. There'll be opportunities

Ho Ho Ho at Hillmount

The award-winning Santa's Grotto at Hillmount is now open for pre-booking online. Renowned as one of Ireland's largest garden centre grottos, visitors are entertained by elves and Mrs Claus as they journey through the winter wonderland, collecting festive treats and taking part in a fun, brain-tickling quiz, before meeting Santa himself. All children visiting Santa will receive a unique keepsake gift and numbers will be restricted to ensure safe social distancing. Santa's Grotto will open on Fri 4 Dec until Wed 23 Dec but just before he jets off back to the North Pole he will host Santa Paws for pets on Thu 24 Dec. Pre-booking essential at

hillmount.co.uk/santas-grotto/





Please remember

Circumstances could change on a daily basis, therefore please check with the venue directly before setting off on your journey.

Walk Through The Wardrobe

Now in its eighth year, this unique festival celebrates the life, work and influence of literary great Clive Staples Lewis. This year's festival takes place 20-22 Nov and will feature online talks, walking tours, family and special events, connecting locals and visitors to the places that inspired some of Lewis's most loved stories. To celebrate the 70th Anniversary of the publication of C.S. Lewis's globally acclaimed *The Lion, the Witch & the Wardrobe*, on Sat 12 Dec Disney's 2005 blockbuster adaptation is being brought to the big screen with a drive-in cinema at Connswater Retail Park. £16 per car.

Find all festival events at eastside.com/events



Making Magical Memories

Santa's official residence in Ireland, Santa's Cottage, in the heart of the Mourne Mountains is once again open for bookings. Take a

tour with Santa's helpers around the traditional Irish cottage to find out what Santa has been up to getting ready for Christmas Eve. Then spend special time with the big man himself beside the fire. This is your chance kids to have a chat and tell Santa what you are longing for this Christmas. After you receive a special gift, why not take some photos to remember your magical visit before exploring Santa's igloo and meeting his special animal friends? Book at Santascottage.co.uk or Tel: 028 4177 2052



MOVIES



Jingle Jangle: A Christmas Journey

Netflix from Friday 13 November Cert PG

A musical adventure set in the festive town of Cobbleton, home to legendary toymaker Jeronimus Jangle (Forest Whitaker). When Jeronimus' formerly loyal apprentice steals his most prized invention, it's down to his bright and inventive granddaughter Journey (Madalen Mills) to "heal old wounds and reawaken the magic within" with a long-forgotten invention – a magical robot named Buddy. Featuring original songs by John Legend and Usher and also starring Hugh Bonneville and Ricky Martin, it's the perfect uplifting antidote to current times.



The Christmas Chronicles 2

Netflix from Wednesday 25 November Cert PG

It's been two years since siblings Kate and Teddy Pierce saved Christmas, and a lot has changed. Kate, now a cynical teenager, is reluctantly spending Christmas in Cancun with her mom's new boyfriend and his son Jack. Unwilling to accept this new version of her family, Kate decides to run away. But when a mysterious, magical troublemaker named Belsnickel threatens to destroy the North Pole and end Christmas for good, Kate and Jack are unexpectedly pulled into a new adventure with Santa Claus (Kurt Russell). Co-starring Goldie Hawn as Mrs Claus, this is an action-packed adventure for the whole family that's full of heart, humour and holiday spirit.



Soul

Premieres 25 December on Disney+ Cert PG

From the makers of *Inside Out* and *Monsters Inc.* Disney Pixar's new movie *Soul* follows a middle-school music teacher named Joe (voiced by Jamie Foxx) with a love for jazz music who finds himself in a metaphysical world where new souls are created. Stuck in this new and strange place, Joe teams up with one soul, 22, (voiced by Tina Fey) to try and explain why life is so wonderful. As Joe desperately tries to show 22 what's great about living, he may just discover the answers to some of life's most important questions.



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