

HER WELLBEING

helping you
through
life's challenges

Welcome and season's greetings from everyone at Food Matters. We are thrilled to have a double issue of *Her Wellbeing* for you to read over the Christmas period. We know that Christmas can be a difficult time, especially when separated from loved ones, and for many, this year is likely to be more challenging than usual.

So in this issue, we're focussing on what small things might bring you joy and make you feel comfortable and safe, even in these difficult times. We've also got some very simple no-cook festive recipes, and a seasonal wordsearch and brain-teaser.

Once you've finished reading this, why not pass it on to someone else who might like to read it. Alternatively, it could be part of your *hygge* by using it to make Christmas decorations!

With best wishes
The Food Matters Team

Is *hygge* the Solution to Surviving Lockdown?

Hygge (pronounced hue-guh) is a Danish word describing a state of cosiness, which makes you feel warm, comfortable and safe. For Danes, the practice of *hygge* provides a safe haven from the stresses of everyday life. The sense of cosiness comes from doing simple things indoors, either alone or with others.



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Hygge became a new trend in many countries a few years ago, when it was picked up by the media and articles appeared in newspapers and magazines. *Hygge* was sold as a lifestyle, which required the purchase of candles, woollen throws, and comfort food cookbooks.

If you're reading this from the confines of prison, you may well be asking, "What on earth has this got to do with me? Scented candles and cookbooks are pretty irrelevant here."

But if you strip away the commercialism and the need to purchase *hygge*-related products, might *hygge* be a daily practise that does have relevance to people in prison?

This is exactly what Danish researcher Linda Kjær Minke and her American colleague Amy B Smoyer wanted to find out. They interviewed a group of women in Danish prisons to discover whether they could find comfort in the practice of *hygge* while serving a custodial sentence.

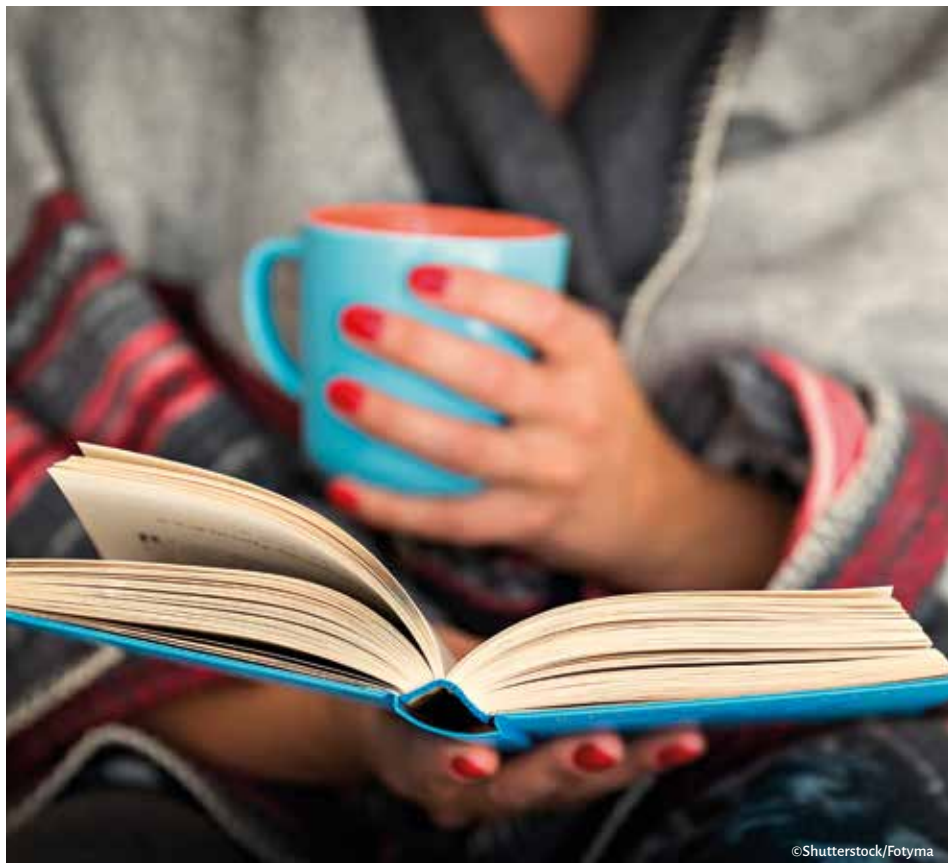
Danish prisons do differ to prisons in the UK – all prison cells have phones in Denmark, whereas in-cell phones are still being rolled out here; also convicted prisoners cook for themselves in Denmark whereas only a few UK prisons have cooking facilities – but Amy's and Linda's findings could still have relevance in the UK.

They published their research in 2019, and the highlighted quotes are what some of the women they interviewed told them about *hygge* in prison.

Food often has a central role in *hygge*, with people preparing comfort food that brings back safe and happy memories. But what if you have limited access to food, or perhaps you have a difficult relationship with food? For some, food can be a trigger, bringing back painful memories of early life trauma.

We asked this when we recently interviewed Amy and Linda. Amy told us, "If you don't want to centre food in this type of practice, there are things like colouring, painting and crochet. But as well as food there is also drink, such as drinking tea."

A cup of tea is the national British



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panacea – the comforter in times of stress and when the experience is shared, it also brings people together. It does in many other countries too, as does coffee. So perhaps we have our own *hygge* practices – we just don't call it that.

Amy agreed, saying, "*Hygge* is translatable to other cultures, but no prison is going to be able to create the *hygge* we see in a Danish prison, because for Danish people it's a cultural practice – from the moment they're born. So Danish people will construct

hygge wherever they are – on a boat, in a prison."

Linda, a Dane herself, explained the essence of *hygge*, "It's something you do that makes you feel safe and calm. In the Covid-19 period, Danish people have talked about how you can do this in lockdown. Many people find it *hyggelig* to paint and draw. To do what you really love to do, and in that way, it's not really all about food. You do something you feel really comfortable with and so you feel calm and relaxed. What I consider *hygge* is not necessarily what other people think is *hygge*."

Amy continued, "It may vary by culture, but it's ... what brings you joy? What restores you? What nourishes your soul and your spirit when you're feeling down? What are your restorative practices? How do you create safety? *Hygge* can use food, but it also can be done with nothing."

So *hygge* can help women find peace in prison and to experience a feeling of safety in an environment that might not always feel safe. But are there any downsides to all this snuggling down and cosiness? Could too much time being *hyggelig* mean shutting off from the trials of the 'outside' world, whether living in prison or in the community?

"When you become trapped in the cell at 9pm, you think 'Now I can have time to myself.' Everything is absolutely peaceful. It's like you go into your own little world ... watch TV or knit. The first time they locked the door, I thought 'I will die' ... but I didn't. We know that we are at peace. We can sit and talk on the phone and watch television."

“In the evening, instead of a sleeping pill, the cheese sandwich is my sleeping pill. Cheese sandwich and two cups of tea. You have to make *hygge* in your cell and you only have a few things: food and photos.”

Linda told us, “*Hygge* is a heavy warm blanket, and when it’s over you, you can’t move. You get warm and tired and passive. There’s nothing pushing you. It’s a lazy condition.”

Perhaps then, *hygge* needs to be

the Yin to the Yang of everyday life. Without going ‘out’, whether it be to attend a treatment programme, education, work or to exercise, it is difficult to appreciate the benefits of *hygge*: inside, feeling cosy and safe.

During the strictest times of Covid, when there is no ‘going out’, is *hygge* still possible? Can you still be peaceful and restorative sitting inside doing *hygge* or is there just too much of it? Linda thinks there will always be some worth to *hygge*, in helping you feel safe and calm.

During the long dark winter, when we naturally crave curling up in a corner with a duvet wrapped around us, it

might be an ideal time to give *hygge* a go, and start by asking, “What do I enjoy most in life? What restores me and brings me joy?”

“Twice a week there is church coffee where we come and buy a cup of coffee and a piece of cake. So we sit there ... it is *hygge*. We talk about everything that is going on in the world. Just as if you were sitting in a café. To sit and talk ... it is safe.”

WHAT IS HYGGE FOR YOU?

To give you some ideas, we have adapted some suggestions made by Jaime L Kurz, writing in Psychology Today at the beginning of the Covid crisis. Why not give them a go, and you may just find unexpected moments of joy, contentment, and security in these unusual and trying times.

1. During times of lockdown, your world is smaller, but there are still things to notice and appreciate. Start by looking around your immediate environment. What sights fill you with good feelings? Bulbs bursting through in a flower bed outside your window, two pigeons preening each other on a rooftop, or a family photo at your bedside? Take a moment to appreciate these things.

2. Going beyond sight: Can you play some soothing music? Eat something with happy warm memories? Hold and sip a warm cup of tea? Wear something soft? You may be doing some of these things already, but you’ll enjoy them much more if you spend a moment really focussing on the sensory experiences they create.

3. Create a nook. Craft a little *hygge* zone for yourself, one that makes you feel relaxed, safe, and cozy. It could be just sitting on your bed,

with photos or cards and drawings from loved ones fixed to the wall, a duvet up over your knees, book or crossword by your side. If you can, a low light rather than a bright overhead light. It just needs to make you feel safe and snug.

4. Embrace traditions. However small, rituals and traditions can provide a deep sense of safety, linking us to our culture while jogging warm memories. Perhaps having a hot chocolate before bed or making some simple Christmas decorations that you previously made with family.

5. Look at old photos and reminisce on warm or funny memories – this can also connect you with your roots.



Images in order top to bottom: ©Shutterstock/Alena Ozerova/Jacob Lund/Jacob Lund

FINDING JOY through creative arts

We asked Jennifer Walmsely and Kate Hadley, co-founders of the BearFace Theatre Community Interest Company (www.bearfacetheatre.org) about the work they do within the criminal justice system.

What is BearFace?

BearFace is a Theatre Community Interest Company (CIC). As a company we have been designing and developing community led arts-based activities in Hampshire and surrounding counties for the past 8 years.

What do you do?

We work with groups collaboratively, to lift the voices of those who feel unheard, sharing messages through inclusive high-quality performance, storytelling and theatre programmes.

The arts have the power to start conversations, open up debate, give us an opportunity to learn about each other from different perspectives and see each other with fresh eyes. Where appropriate we aim to elevate and share the work in order to reach those who may not be listening and need to.

Where do you work?

We work with a wide variety of communities but particularly with women and men in prison and on probation. Amongst others, we're currently working in partnership with the PIPE Unit at HMP Send.



Face ourselves and our communities and start owning our stories and our futures.

Lean into important conversations, listen, move, laugh, find common joy, express, perform, spectate, ignite debate and show up for ourselves and others.

Bearing our faces to the now and taking part in the positive growth for ourselves and for a more equal society, creating theatre, our theatre, BearFace Theatre.

What sort of topics do you cover in your group sessions?

Some of the things we cover include:

- Positive self-talk: What have we done well for ourselves?
- Courage: What does that mean to us?
- Comfort zones: Stepping out of our comfort/panic zones and challenging ourselves. What can we gain?
- Realistic goals & achievement: What does success mean to us?
- Moments of connection: What is true friendship? Misunderstandings, random acts of kindness, trust.



In the group sessions, how do you encourage women to find the ingredients for joy?

We use creative arts such as drama, poetry and music to explore questions like:

- If you tap into your senses, what can you see, smell, taste, hear, feel?
- What are you grateful for inside and out?
- How have you grown and what have you learnt whilst being in prison/ on probation?
- What brings you joy? What does it mean to you?
- What do you want for your future?

What have women who've attended your sessions thought about them?

Participants contributed to our report, The Creating Change Evaluation Report (2019/20) written by Alexandra Russell. They told us:

"At the beginning I was thinking, 'Oh I don't want to do these silly games' but then getting into the games and I just forgot what anyone thought of me. I've just played the games and just loved it. I've realised that I am me, she's still in here, I'm not this grown-up miserable cow who has no fun!"

"It is creative drama and motivational. Laughing and playing – forgetting about the everyday stress, worries, being sad, being fearful of something – coming here and just having fun and being a bit silly and childlike. But still learning about your own emotions."

"I enjoyed showing a side of me that I wouldn't out there, raising my mood..."

"It helped me look at the past in a more positive way and want to make a positive change to the future. The activities made me learn empathy and to see things from other people's point of view."

We're sure our readers would like to get a sense of what you do, is that possible?

We proudly present a group poem, 'The ingredients of Joy' collaboratively written by women we worked with on the PIPE unit in HMP Send.



The images accompanying this article were co-created by the women Bearface Theatre CIC work with out in the community.



The Ingredients of Joy

From the 'BB Kitchen'
HMP Send PIPE unit 2020

A spring day when everything blooms
Feeling loved and believing it

Life, fun and happiness

It's onions, garlic, peppers, All- Purpose seasoning

I need a bit of All-Purpose seasoning in my life!!

Chilli flakes

Jerk seasoning

Feeling accepted, family, happiness

Butterflies in my life

Being with friends

Cooking dinner whilst singing

My son having a new life

For loved ones

People

When I feel seen and heard

Live – love – laugh – life

Live – love – laugh – life

Cooking and eating

Cooking and eating

That's the whole thing

Family

Knowing you're loved

Proper drum

Proper love

Joy is having the courage to know it's gonna be alright

A day when everything blooms

Answers for 12 days of Christmas

Brain Tease:

- 1) 4 calling birds, 11 pipers piping and 12 drummers drumming, total 27
- 2) 2 wings each for 1 partridge, 2 Turtle doves, 3 French hens, 4 calling birds, 6 geese, 7 swans, total 46
- 3) 10 pints each for 8 maids a milking for the last 5 days, total 400 pints
- 4) 2 feet each for 8 maids, 9 ladies, 10 lords, 11 pipers and 12 drummers, total 100 feet

- 5) 1 egg each for 3 hens for the last 10 days, total 30
- 6) 5 rings at £40 each, for 8 days, total £1,600

Issue 3 crossword answers:

Across – 1 coral, 2 Neptune, 3 cod, 4 oyster, 5 prawn, 7 sardines, 8 turtle, 9 sprat, 10 halibut
Down – cuttlefish, 3 crab, 4 octopus, 6 kelp, 9 sirens, 10 hermit

A taste of Christmas

Her Wellbeing is all about supporting your mind, body and soul. When it comes to food, choosing the healthiest option isn't always what we need to nurture our inner selves.

Sometimes we need a little treat – something to give us joy and perhaps bring back a fond memory: a recipe passed down by a grandparent, a meal shared with someone special. Food and drinks can contribute to that feeling of *hygge*: perhaps for you that *hygge* feeling comes from a mug of hot chocolate with a favourite biscuit to dunk in it, or a bowl of tomato soup with marmite soldiers.

It's so easy to just open a packet of sweets as a treat, but a large part of the enjoyment of food is in the preparation of it, from choosing ingredients, following a recipe and arranging the finished items prettily on a plate. You can make these recipes without any cooking facilities because they are either no cook or require only boiled water. They all have a festive feel, and the healthy bonus is that dried fruit and nuts are packed full of fibre and nutrients.



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Stuffed dates

An assortment of stuffed dates looks special and festive

Ingredients:

- **A box of dates**
- **Choose from the following fillings:**
- **Almonds, peanut butter, pistachio nuts, chocolate chunks, chocolate covered raisins**

1. If the dates have stones, remove them and open the split without breaking the date.
2. Place a small amount of filling of choice in each date and arrange on a plate.



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Energy ball chocolate truffles

When rolled in cocoa or hot chocolate powder, these energy ball treats look just like chocolate truffles, but are packed full of oats, fruit and nuts.

Ingredients:

- **1 yoghurt pot of dried fruit of choice e.g. dates, raisins, prunes**
- **1 yoghurt pot of oats**
- **Half a yogurt pot of peanut butter**
- **Cocoa powder or hot chocolate powder**
- **Half a teaspoon of ground spice such as cinnamon, ginger, mixed spice (optional)**

1. Remove any stones from the dates then chop as small as you can and place in a bowl. With a fork or the back of a spoon, mush them as much as you can.
2. Add the oats, peanut butter, spice and 2 teaspoons of cocoa or hot chocolate powder. Stir to combine the ingredients well. You can add a little black tea or boiling water if it is too dry.
3. Take a small amount of mix and roll into a truffle-size ball.
4. Place a couple of teaspoons of cocoa/hot chocolate powder on a plate and crush out any lumps with the back of a spoon. Roll each ball in the powder to coat.
5. You could alternatively coat in chopped nuts or sugar mixed with a little spice.



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Festive hot chocolate

Ingredients:

- **Instant hot chocolate powder**
- **Boiling water**
- **A pinch of ground cinnamon**
- **An orange or clementine**
- **A splash of milk, soya milk, evaporated milk or a blob of tinned cream**



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1. Make up the hot chocolate with boiling water according to instructions, filling your mug around two thirds full.
2. Using a knife or fork, shave some of the zest (orange colour only) off the outside of an orange, into the mug. You might only get a little, so stir the knife or fork into the hot chocolate to remove the fragrant orange oil.
3. Add the ground cinnamon, stir well and allow to infuse for a few minutes.
4. To serve, add a splash of your favourite milk or a spoonful of cream.

A cosy cup of chai

Ingredients:

- **Teabag**
- **Boiling water**
- **A pinch of ground cinnamon, ground ginger or other spice of your choice**
- **Tinned evaporated milk or condensed milk**

1. Place the teabag in a mug and fill two-thirds with boiling water.
2. Add a pinch each of your favourite warming spices, stir well and allow to infuse for a few minutes.
3. Remove the teabag (or earlier if you prefer weaker tea).
4. Top up the mug with condensed milk, or if you don't want a sweet drink use evaporated milk. Stir and drink.



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Why do we eat what we eat at Christmas?

Have you ever wondered why we eat turkey & Brussel sprouts? Mince pies and Christmas pud? Read on to find out a little bit of history about our traditional Christmas fare – which may not actually be that traditional!

Turkey

It's said that King Henry VIII first introduced eating turkey for Christmas. But for the common folk, it didn't really become popular until after World War II with more industrialised farming and cheaper meat. Prior to that, it was goose or capon for those who could afford meat, although Charles Dickens featured a turkey Christmas dinner in *A Christmas Carol*.

Brussel Sprouts

These winter-harvested mini-cabbages are hated as much as they are loved. They first became popular in Britain in the 1800s, when many of the current Christmas traditions evolved, and when the Christmas roast was gaining popularity. The British climate is ideal for sprout growing and the Brits eat more of them than any other nation.



Mince Pies

These sweet pies contain dried fruit and spices, but they traditionally contained beef or venison too. Recipes go back to the 1500s. Dried fruits were the fruits most readily available in winter and spices were common in medieval recipes.



Christmas Pudding

Also called plum pudding, because the Victorians used to refer to raisins as plums. Christmas pudding is a boiled pudding with lots of dried fruit and spices.



Early recipes for plum pudding appear in the 1700s. Like mince pies, they originally contained some meat, though it disappeared as sweetened ingredients increased. In Victorian times, the traditions of making a wish when stirring the pudding, hiding sixpences and flaming with brandy were introduced.

Yule log

A wooden Yule log is traditionally a special log chosen to be burnt on the fire at Christmas – a pagan tradition predating Christianity in many European countries. The edible cake Yule log or *bûche de Noël* originates from France in the 1800s.



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The 12 days of Christmas Brainteaser

1. On the 12th day of Christmas, how many tuneful people and birds was I given?
2. What is the total number of wings on the birds given to me on the seventh day?
3. All the maids given to me on day 8 milk 1 cow a day, and each cow produces 10 pints of milk per day. What is the total quantity of milk, from the first day these maids were given to me until the end of Christmas?
4. If you add up the women's and men's feet on the people given to me on the 12th day, how many feet in total?
5. If all the hens laid an egg a day, by the last day, how many eggs would be laid from the first batch of hens given to me (on day 3)?
6. If each gold ring was worth £40 pounds, how much were all the rings given to me over Christmas worth in total?



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Word Search

- CHRISTMAS TREE
- CRANBERRIES
- MINCE PIE
- MISTLETOE
- NATIVITY
- NUTCRACKER
- REINDEER
- STOCKING
- TURKEY
- YULE LOG



O	U	G	M	Y	O	P	O	Y	O	L	W	C	G	W	K
H	K	J	C	W	X	F	T	E	U	D	C	T	Y	G	F
G	M	Y	K	S	A	D	C	K	W	G	W	X	T	A	S
G	F	H	A	T	G	U	E	R	S	B	S	K	C	A	X
Y	O	X	G	O	L	E	L	U	Y	V	Y	V	N	S	A
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Y	T	I	V	I	T	A	N	F	E	A	S	U	E	S	D