



Getting through the festive season

This time of year is **a lot**.

It can be full of fun, family and friends. It can also bring anxiety, pressure, or feelings of loneliness.

Whether you're celebrating, just trying to get through, or somewhere in between, here are some science-backed strategies to help.



**Plan ahead
to manage
holiday
triggers**

**Set
boundaries
to avoid
unwelcome
convos**

**Ramp up
your self-
care**

**Keep a
healthy
approach
to food &
drink**

**Keep in
touch with
supportive
people**

**It's okay
not to be
okay**

**Make new
traditions**

**Know that
this too
shall pass**

Plan ahead to manage holiday triggers

Often right before we spiral into anxiety, there are warning signs.

A warning sign might be a change in your behaviour, thinking, or a sensation in your body. Knowing what your warning signs are can help you catch yourself before you spiral.

Warning signs might include:

Physical sensations <ul style="list-style-type: none">• restlessness, jumpiness, can't sit still• feeling nervous a lot• racing heart	Thoughts <ul style="list-style-type: none">• repetitive or cycling thoughts• obsessing about things that have happened in the past• self-criticism and negative self-talk
Behaviour <ul style="list-style-type: none">• not eating enough or overeating• poor sleep• forgetfulness	Feelings <ul style="list-style-type: none">• hopeless• irritable or angry• fear or panic

Knowing what your warning signs are is important because it can help you to take action before anxiety becomes overwhelming.

Once you've identified your early warning signs, you can make a plan to address them.

If you feel comfortable, share your plan with a supportive person ahead of time.

My wellness plan

This is what I'm like when things are going well:



Every day I need these things to keep my life in balance:

I need less of these things:

When these things happen, I notice myself getting more anxious:

My wellness plan

Some of the early warning signs I’ve noticed in myself are:

Physical sensations	Thoughts
Behaviour	Feelings

These things help me manage my anxiety:

When I need help these are the people I can turn to:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.



Set boundaries to avoid unwelcome conversations

Get-togethers can be challenging at the best of times. But especially over the holiday period.

So how do you avoid unwelcome conversations or prepare for uncomfortable encounters?

Some strategies include:

* **Choose a wing person**

If there are topics that are sensitive to you, and there's someone you feel comfortable sharing them with, write them down. Ask your wing person help change the conversation if it heads in that direction.

* **Redirect the conversation**

Make a list of safe topics. If things are starting to get tense or difficult, redirect the discussion to something you find more comfortable.

* **Use a code word**

Let someone you feel comfortable with know what your word means. This can help you find a way to excuse yourself if you're feeling uncomfortable or overwhelmed.

* **Take a breather**

Excuse yourself! Go to the bathroom, or find somewhere to take a break. Taking a few minutes away for some deep breaths can make all the difference.



Scan the QR
or [watch online](#)

Try a two-minute
box breathing
exercise.

Box breathing can
help you cope with
stress, panic, worry
and difficult thoughts.

Ramp up your self-care

It's important to schedule in some time for things that help you feel grounded—particularly in the lead up to (or after) a stressful day.

This might include things like having a bubble bath, going for a walk, listening to music, spending time in nature, or just resting without committing to anything.





Keep a healthy relationship with food and drink

There's often a stronger focus on food over the holidays. This can bring up feelings of guilt and a lot of body insecurities.

To look after our physical and mental health during the holiday period, it's important to remind ourselves about what a healthy relationship with food and drink looks like.

We can **write this down somewhere** to have on hand when we find difficult thoughts arising.

In general, a healthy relationship involves:

- Seeing food as just food. Not labelling it as good or bad.
- Remembering that food is just one part of a balanced life.
- Eating different foods for different reasons.
- Eating food to celebrate, socialise, and for comfort.
- Eating food to nourish and fuel our bodies.



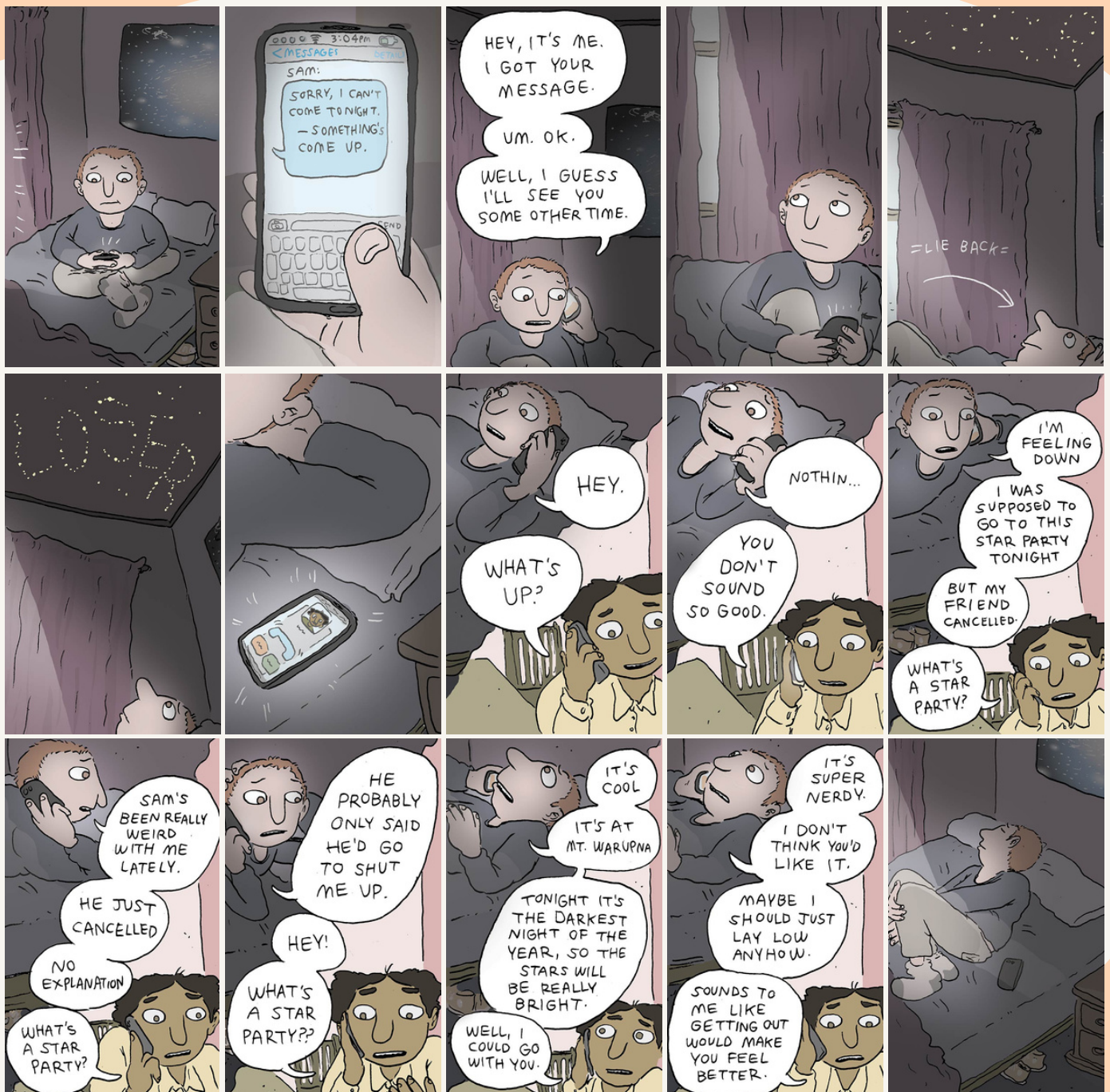
If you're finding it hard to remember these things over the holidays, you can speak to a trusted person or professional (like a GP) to help build a plan and feel supported around your eating.

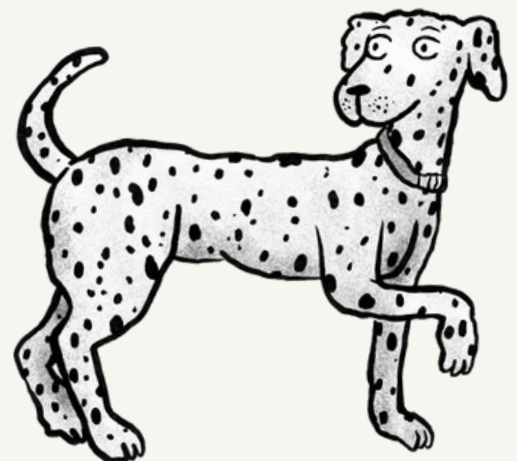
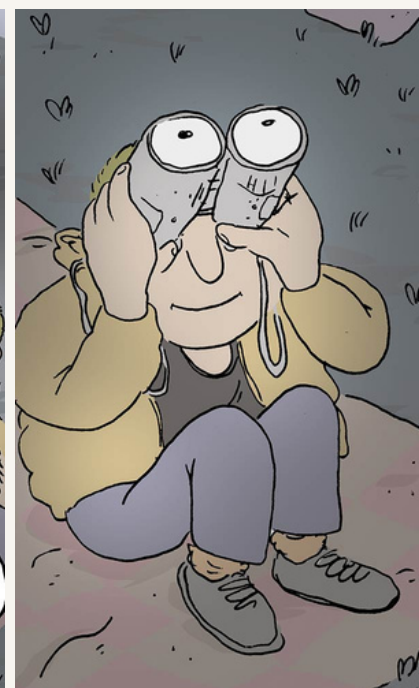
Keep in touch with supportive people

If we're used to seeing people almost every day (at work, school, uni or TAFE) the holidays can feel lonely.

Keeping in regular contact with positive and supportive people can keep us feeling well.

Think about **who** and **what** gives you energy. Make plans in advance to keep in contact with those people, if you can.



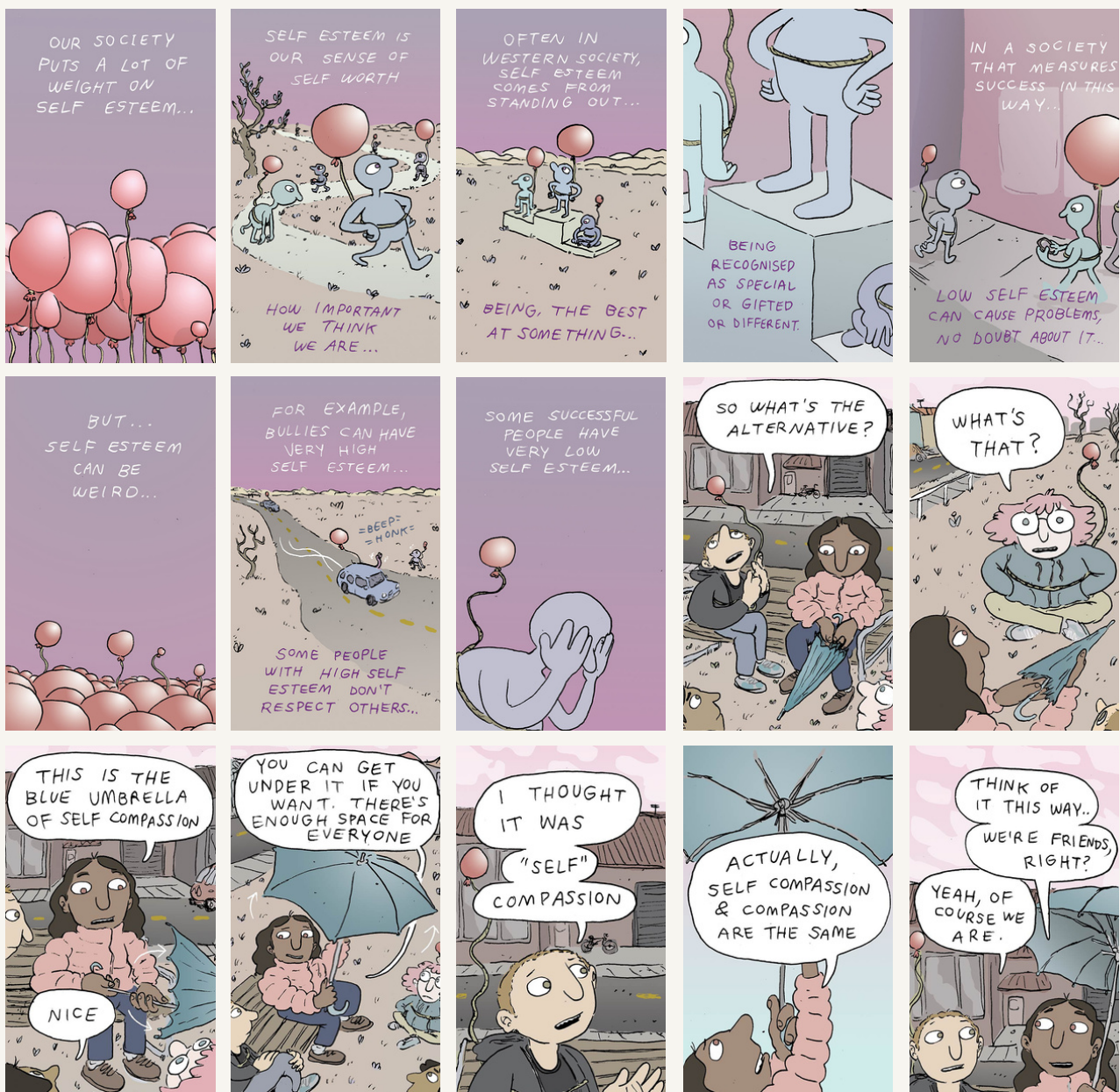


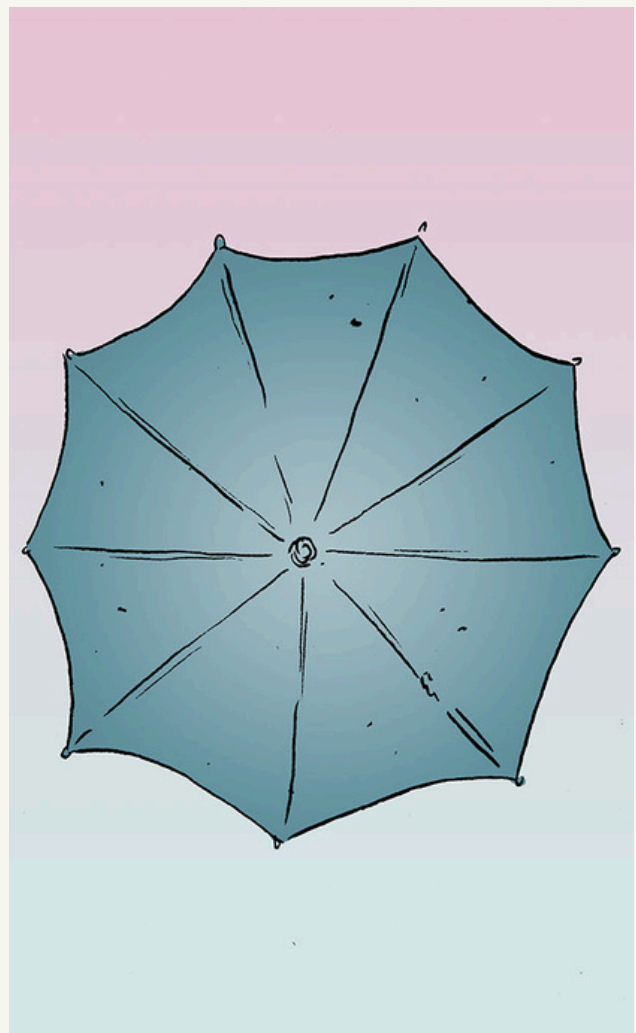
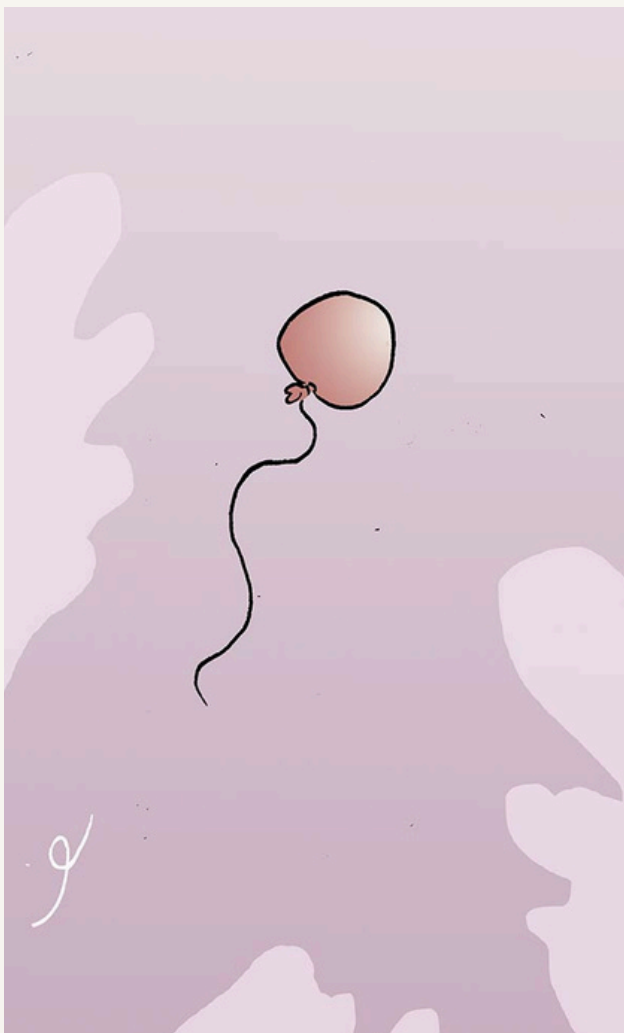
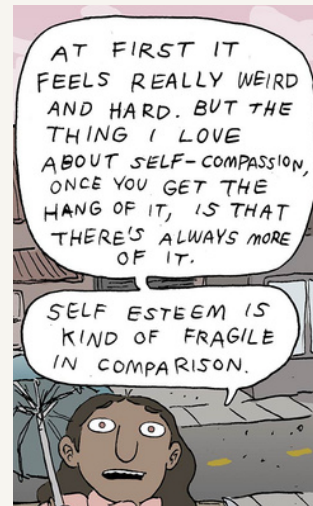
It's okay not to be okay

Be kind to yourself and try to respect what you need.

The holidays can be hard. It's okay if you're not your regular self, if you need extra time and space to de-stress, and if you find that your holiday looks different to other people's.

Look after yourself as much as you can by planning time for you and remind yourself that it's okay to not be okay.





Make new traditions



Take the holidays into your own hands and make some of your own plans to celebrate.

This can help you enjoy the holidays on your own terms and find ways to celebrate that are meaningful to you.

Have a think about the things you value and try to schedule in some time to do activities that align with those things.

Our **values** are like guideposts that help us stay on track, no matter what we feel.

Our values are not about what we achieve or get. They're about our relationships – what kind of friend we want to be and who we want to be for ourselves.

Values include things like:

Adventure: to be adventurous; to actively seek, create, or explore novel or stimulating experience

Compassion: to act with kindness towards those who are suffering

Creativity: to be creative or innovative

Fun: to be fun-loving; to seek, create, and engage in fun-filled activities

Independence: to be self-supportive, and choose my own way of doing things



If you value friends and chosen family, you could schedule an event for those people in your life. If you value giving back, you could try volunteering. Or, if you value creativity, you could try baking something or doing some crafts.

Know that this too shall **pass**

The holiday period can be challenging. Know that this time will pass. With some strategies on hand (and some support), you can get through.



Remember, **you don't have to tackle the holiday season alone.**

Everyone needs their own support team: people who love and trust, who can help you get through the day.

Make a list of the people in your life who are supporting you.

Think about the sort of people who will be over in a heartbeat if you're feeling icky. These are the people who you can go to when the holiday period gets overwhelming, and you need more support.

People in my support team:

For those seeking urgent help or crisis support

If you're in immediate danger, dial 000.

If you or someone you know is feeling unsafe, overwhelmed, or needs urgent support, these services are here to help — 24/7 and free.



Suicide call back service

1300 659 467 | suicidecallbackservice.org.au

Provides free 24/7 telephone, online, and video counselling and crisis support to all Australians affected by suicide.



Lifeline Australia

13 11 14 | lifeline.org.au

Provides free 24/7 online and phone personal crisis support and suicide prevention services to all Australians.



Kids Helpline

1800 55 1800 | kidshelpline.com.au

Provides free and confidential 24/7 phone and online counselling for children and young people aged between five and 25 years.



13Yarn

13 92 76 | 13yarn.org.au

Provides free 24/7, confidential crisis support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Connect with a trained Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander crisis supporter.