

# PsychLingo

Exploring English Through Psychology

December 2023, Issue no. 1

Dear Readers, we are happy to announce the inaugural issue of "PsychLingo", a monthly magazine that explores the English language through the lens of psychology. Here you can find plenty of articles related to psychology, fun and light lifestyle corner and language exercises all in one place! Have a great read and hopefully, see you next month!

## INDEX:

Letter from the Editor .....	3
How to ACTUALLY Accomplish Your Goals? .....	4
Glossary #1 .....	6
SAD Can Make You Sad this Winter .....	6
What causes SAD and winter blues? .....	7
How do we distinguish SAD from common winter blues? .....	8
What are the treatment options for SAD? .....	9
Glossary #2 .....	11
Annotations and sources .....	13
Depression and Eating Disorders at Festive Season .....	14
Glossary #3 .....	16
Festive Assertiveness for Beginners .....	16

How to be more assertive?.....	18
Glossary #4 .....	21
Sources .....	22
Festive Stress .....	22
Glossary #5 .....	24
Tricky Ads .....	25
Pun Please!.....	26
Whimsical Language.....	26
Idioms.....	26
Proverbs.....	27
Tricky words .....	27
Recipe for a winter spiced tea .....	28
Culture Club .....	29
"Rise of the Guardians" .....	29
"How to Win Friends and Influence People" .....	29
Last but not least.....	30
TED Talk.....	30
Did you know... ..	31
Find us elsewhere too! .....	31
Our Staff.....	32

# Letter from the Editor

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the exciting journey that lies ahead of us. This is the first issue of our university magazine, "*PsychLingo*". As the name suggests, our primary aim is to spread awareness about psychological vocabulary. However, we do not intend to stop at that. Our objective is not limited to teaching you new terms or helping you improve your reading and speaking skills. We aspire to do much more than that. We decided to address problems that face us in everyday life, or maybe not so every day.

We want to share some scientific knowledge, which we acknowledge may be tedious to read. For this reason, we selected information that (in our opinion) will help you, make you feel better or be fun to read. At the same time, we will be trying to inform you about things related to what is happening in a given month.

We would like to invite you to participate in creating this magazine. On the last page of every issue, you will find an email address where you can send us your ideas or problems that you would like us to address.

As for this month's issue, our team have put resources into helping you get through Christmas and New Year. We all are aware of problems and difficulties that arise every year at this time. We want to offer support and even solutions. We also added some things that are there just to be enjoyed while reading.

Last, I want to thank the whole team for their dedicated effort and work put into this magazine.

Enjoy reading!

# How to ACTUALLY Accomplish Your Goals?

The Science behind Self-control

By Weronika Piebiak

2024 is coming in a few weeks. Many of us plan on having and accomplishing our New Year's resolutions. You may want to start exercising, maintaining a specific diet, or staying away from certain substances. To succeed at all those goals, you need one thing – self-control. In this article, I'll present the science behind it.

A popular misconception about self-control is that it is a personality trait - you can be born with it or develop it with the proper upbringing. It turns out we had it all wrong. Recent research suggests that self-control is awareness. But what does that mean?

Let's make it an example – You want to stop smoking. You want to, but your mind tells you it's not the right choice. Now, as long as you monitor that internal conflict, you won't smoke. You lose the second you stop paying attention to it or forget about your resolution.

Self-control is basically your ability to monitor internal conflict. We can also think about it as a reserve that is constantly running out – you might have noticed that you can exert it on some days, and on others, you can't. Why is that?

There are two factors that are diminishing this reserve: emotional regulation and stress. On stressful days or when something upsetting happens, you will be less likely to exert self-control. So, does that mean that you will be disciplined only on good days? Absolutely not! The way to counter that is to learn alternative self-regulation and re-internalise your attention.

When something upsetting happens, the natural response is to suppress our feelings and forget about it. It's not the worst way to cope, but it shuts off our ability to monitor conflict and our self-control. When we ignore what is happening inside, we are unaware of our inner life and lose the ability to control ourselves.

We can oppose that by developing new ways of coping. Good examples would be journaling, meditating, or simply going for a walk – anything that helps you process your feelings instead of shutting them off.

And what about stress? We can't just not be stressed. That's right, but it's not the stress that keeps us from being disciplined. It's the thing that comes with it. When stressed, we externalise our attention onto things that stress us out – we fear losing our job or getting a bad mark on our latest test. We can't stop being stressed, but we can re-internalise our attention. To do that, take a couple of minutes to focus on how you are feeling right now. That way, you regain your ability to monitor conflict.

If you struggle with maintaining self-control, the good news is there's a way to improve it. Because self-control is awareness, we can train it by meditation. Because this practice is just paying attention to your breathing, music or body, it is a perfect exercise. You don't even have to do it fully. Paying attention to your inner world during a walk or other daily activities will help you just as much.

## Glossary #1

**awareness** – knowledge and understanding of something

**coping** – a way of dealing with problems or difficult scenarios

**emotional regulation** – controlling your own emotions, preventing outbursts

**externalise** – express or manifest something, typically thoughts or feelings, outwardly

**internal conflict** – being torn between different choices or decisions

**monitor** – to watch over something

**self-control** – the ability to control your emotions and actions

**suppress** – to prevent something, like emotions, from being expressed

# SAD Can Make You Sad this Winter

By Martyna Lekan & Karolina Tomczak

It is estimated (annotation no.1) that about 5% of the U.S. population experience something commonly known as 'seasonal depression'. It's well over 16 million people just in the United States! But this disorder is not attributed only to Americans. So, if you suspect you may suffer from a more severe form of "winter blues", you are not alone. It is important to reach out for help if your mental state gets in the way of your daily life. If

you are new to this phenomenon or wish to expand your knowledge about it, this article is for you!

According to psychbd.com (annotation no.2): "Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) (also called Major Depressive Disorder with seasonal pattern in the DSM-5) is a subtype of depression related to mood changes that are linked to seasonal changes." It is mainly experienced in southern and northern regions where seasonal shifts are much more rapid and intense than in the central part of Earth.

In fall and winter, when the temperature drops significantly, days get shorter, and we get remarkably less sunlight, it all can trigger depression-like symptoms, which often could be diagnosed as a disorder. These symptoms, as described in ICD-11 diagnostic criteria (annotation no.3), may include difficulty concentrating, feelings of worthlessness, excessive or inappropriate guilt, hopelessness, recurrent thoughts of death or suicide, changes in appetite or sleep, psychomotor agitation or retardation, and reduced energy or fatigue.

### **What causes SAD and winter blues?**

In the current state of medical knowledge, we cannot say for certain what causes Seasonal Affective Disorder. One of the leading theories suggests that depressive symptoms during winter are linked to our melatonin cycle. Melatonin is a hormone that helps us sustain healthy sleep by making us feel tired and getting us to wind down before resting. Normally, it starts to release when our eyes detect that it's getting notably dark outside and send a signal to the suprachiasmatic nucleus (SCN), a tiny structure in our brain, playing the role of what we often call our biological clock (annotation no.4). Then SCN sends this signal further into the brain to induce melatonin secretion, making us drowsy. Ideally, melatonin levels in the organism should start to increase two hours

before sleep, peak three hours into the sleeping time, and for this cycle to be completed, wear off when the daylight intensifies. Reduced daytime, and so in consequence, later sunrises disrupt this pattern by postponing the decline of melatonin levels. This prompts us to wake up still tired and foggy and makes our energy unable to peak highly during the day. Not everyone with SAD, though, experiences excessive sleepiness. So another theory implies, as stated by the National Institute of Mental Health (annotation no.5), that people experiencing SAD have lowered levels of serotonin, which helps regulate mood. Sunlight might affect our brains' ability to retain normal levels of this hormone, so a decreased amount of daylight may have a negative influence on this process.

In addition, struggling with vitamin D deficiencies during a short-day period could also contribute to the disruption of serotonin activity. Vitamin D can be obtained by food consumption and our skin's exposure to direct sunlight. With so little amounts of daylight in the fall and winter, it is insufficient for our bodies to produce proper amounts of Vitamin D, further reducing serotonin levels for people with SAD and worsening their depressive symptoms.

### **How do we distinguish SAD from common winter blues?**

It can be an entirely normal occurrence to undergo slight changes in your mood and overall well-being during the fall and winter periods, considering all the circumstances accompanying seasonal shifts. Tests carried out by Yale's Winter Depression Research Clinic (annotation no.6) (from Yale's School of Medicine) have shown that about 90% of subjects tested have experienced changes of mood, decrease in energy, shifts of appetite, and weight, all connected to winter. We have to remember, though, that SAD is a form of clinical depression. The

National Institute of Mental Health emphasises that to be diagnosed with SAD, patients must experience the pattern of symptoms for at least two years and, what is important, without any other episodes not related to seasonal changes. It is typical for individuals with SAD to recover fully over the summer. According to the Yale Clinic, patients who don't meet a set of criteria connected to clinical depression can also be diagnosed with subsyndromal SAD. In both situations, treatment often proves to be successful.

### **What are the treatment options for SAD?**

- Light therapy

According to [health.harvard.edu](http://health.harvard.edu) (annotation no.7), specific light exposure can be a successful form of treatment with the right dose of light.

Although the dose amount will vary for all people and should be carefully individualised to maximise efficacy, it is generally recommended to spend 30 minutes daily in 10,000 lux (unit of illuminance) of white light, based on the average response.

- Pharmacotherapy

Medicine successful in treating depression includes groups called SSRIs (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors), such as fluoxetine or sertraline<sup>8</sup>. However, it is essential to keep in mind that all antidepressants and other psychiatric medications can only be prescribed by specialised healthcare providers and should be handled with caution, strictly following instructions provided by your doctor and the particular drug's leaflet.

- Psychotherapy

Therapy sessions can be used to help people learn healthy strategies and coping mechanisms valuable to productively deal with negative

thoughts or difficult experiences. It can also be a form of emotional support and diving deeper into our mental state in order to better understand ourselves and our feelings.

- Vitamin D supplementation

As explained before, vitamin D deficiencies may intensify depressive symptoms as it is suspected to have a role in stimulating serotonin activity. Considering a significant decrease in its natural intake from sunlight, it is advised to supplement vitamin D during fall and winter regardless of the occurrence of SAD symptoms.

Those are solutions prescribed and supervised by specialists such as psychiatrists, psychologists, or any medical practitioners, who you should turn to in the first instance in case of emergency. But what if you don't suffer from any form of clinical depression, yet you still sense that seasonal change affects you? Do you feel slightly off and want to improve your mental state during those cold months? You can implement plenty of precautions in your daily life to soothe your mood, prevent more severe symptoms from developing, and help yourself adjust to this shift. Matthew Solan, Executive Editor of Harvard's Men's Health Watch, comes up with a list of helpful suggestions (annotation no.8):

- Create a nap plan. Daily naps can help you overcome tiredness. Remember that naps longer than 30 minutes can defeat the purpose by making you foggy. Focus on your sleep pattern.
- Reduce caffeine intake. Bear in mind that caffeine can last in our body for up to 10 hours, which may aggravate your ability to fall and stay asleep.

- Compensate for the seasonal lack of sun. Give yourself access to white light! Maybe try changing your lightbulbs from yellow to white and spending about 30 minutes in their light in the morning.
- Spend as much time outside while it's still bright as possible.
- Don't give up on physical activities such as regular exercise. It is an excellent way to boost your serotonin, dopamine, and endorphins<sup>10</sup>. All are hormones crucial in maintaining a healthy and happy state of mind. They play a huge role in reducing your perception of pain, reducing stress and anxiety symptoms, increasing energy levels, boosting self-esteem, and improving sleep quality.

To sum everything up, Seasonal Affective Disorder is a form of clinical depression with a seasonal pattern. Although not everyone experiencing a decline in their mood during a cold period could be diagnosed with SAD. Considering how common this phenomenon is, we should take precautions in our daily lives: good sleep hygiene, regular physical activity, and exposure to bright light to prevent our symptoms from worsening or simply to improve our well-being. Note that if you experience severe depressive symptoms, don't be afraid to reach out for professional help and support from your loved ones.

We hope this winter keeps you well!

## **Glossary #2**

**aggravate** – to disrupt, worsen (a situation)

**boost** – positively impact

**decline** – to decrease in amount or intensity

**deficiency** – lack of something that is needed

**disruption** – a significant disturbance or interruption

**drowsy** – sleepy

**efficacy** – the ability or capacity to produce a desired effect or result

**exposure (to)** – a condition of being subjected to experiencing something

**fatigue** – a lasting feeling of tiredness

**intake** – an amount of a substance consumed

**occurrence** – something that happens

**psychomotor agitation** – excessive restlessness, increased physical activity

**psychomotor retardation** – slowing down or reduction of physical and mental activity

**retain** – to keep or continue to have something

**Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)** – a medical condition in which a person does not have much energy and enthusiasm during the winter, typically associated with the reduced period of natural light

**secretion** – the action of producing something (e.g. melatonin)

**selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs)** – a class of medication commonly prescribed to treat depression

**soothe** – to calm down, make better

**subsyndromal SAD** – a milder form of Seasonal Affective Disorder

**suprachiasmatic nucleus (SCN)** – a small region located in the hypothalamus, which plays a crucial role in regulating the circadian rhythm

**wind down** – to relax

## **Annotations and sources**

1.

<https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/seasonal-affective-disorder>

2.

<https://www.psychdb.com/mood/1-depression/seasonal-affective-disorder>

3.

<https://icd.who.int/browse11/l->

[m/en#/http%3a%2f%2fid.who.int%2fid%2fentity%2f1194756772](https://icd.who.int/en#http%3a%2f%2fid.who.int%2fid%2fentity%2f1194756772)

4.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/10548871/>

5.

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/seasonal-affective-disorder>

6.

[https://medicine.yale.edu/psychiatry/research/programs/clinical\\_people/winter/](https://medicine.yale.edu/psychiatry/research/programs/clinical_people/winter/)

7.

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/depression/seasonal-affective-disorder-overview>

8.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK430661/>

# Depression and Eating Disorders at Festive Season

By Aleksandra Dziubak

Christmas is that time of the year that stereotypically makes everybody change their mood from a depressive to a joyful one. We become happier and have more energy. We enjoy cleaning every corner of our houses even though we usually hate and avoid it. But that ecstatic feeling doesn't include everyone. Some of our friends and family consider Christmas time one of the most challenging periods of the year. People with depression and different types of eating disorders find this time really difficult. Why is it so hard for them to get through Christmastide? How can we assist them in managing their emotions and anxiety during this difficult period?

People with depression usually have problems with their mood and energy. It's hard for them to even get out of bed. Many healthy people don't understand how it's possible not to have the energy to do basic things. During Christmastime, there's always a lot to do, such as cleaning the house and preparing various dishes. People with depression might have problems with completing all these tasks. December weather is not helping either. This month is always dark and cold, making people miserable and nostalgic. At the end of the year, even healthy people may

struggle to stay in a positive mood. And it's even worse for those with this mental illness.

It's important to remember that we need to respect the feelings and well-being of our friends and relatives struggling with this mental disorder. They will truly appreciate every form of assistance and emotional support. Visiting them and showing that we are always with them and they can count on us is always seen as an act of kindness. But pushing them to meet or ignoring their request to leave them alone is not a good method. Respecting the boundaries is always a key.

People with eating disorders also have a tough time. Their problems often involve family gatherings, which are integral to the holiday season. Lots of food and people encouraging you to try the cheesecake they prepared is stressful. Thoughts about eating are overwhelming and make them want to cry. The desire to try the cheesecake is there, but feelings of guilt take over. Family members by pushing them to try dishes make the temptation even bigger. Some individuals give in, but they feel guilty immediately afterwards. On the other hand, those with strong willpower will resist the temptation, but they will still be unsatisfied as they really want to eat something that is off-limits. Sounds like a nightmare.

When sitting next to someone with food issues, be mindful that comments and attention to dishes may be painful and cause strong emotions. Even if we are not sure if someone has an eating disorder, we must refrain from commenting on what and how much that person has eaten. The content of someone's plate is not our problem, and we shouldn't talk about it. Comments about a person's weight and appearance are also inappropriate. We need to remember that comments such as "I notice you've put on/lost weight" can be interpreted differently by different people. While some may consider them

compliments, others may find them painful and make hasty eating decisions.

Remembering these simple rules will help our friends who are struggling with eating disorders and depression to get through the Christmas season. Christmas is a time for celebration and spending quality time with loved ones. Let's show our support and make this time comfortable for everyone.

## **Glossary #3**

**Christmastide** – the period from December 25 to January 5

**depression** – a mental disease in which a person is very unhappy for long periods of time and has difficulty functioning within the societal norm

**eating disorder** – a mental disease in which healthy eating habits are distorted

**miserable** – very unhappy

**overwhelming** – strong, difficult to fight against

**temptation** – a need for something you know is not meant for you

**willpower** – the ability to control your thoughts and actions in a situation

# **Festive Assertiveness for Beginners**

By Joanna Łukasiewicz

We worked diligently during the past months to be productive members of society, and now Santa Claus is on his way to town with a promise of well-deserved relaxation during the holidays. We're encouraged to embrace the holiday spirit with our family and friends. Spending quality time with them is often regarded as the true essence of the festive season. Unfortunately, it comes with its challenges. Why? The larger the group of people, the higher the probability of them asking us inappropriate questions, often invading our privacy or giving us their unsolicited opinions. Whether this behaviour results from their curiosity fuelled by separation or their personality traits, I have great news for you . It is not necessary to suffer in silence or use aggression against them. Let me introduce you to your new best friend, assertiveness.

The classical definition of assertiveness states that it is a "third way of behaving" in contrast to aggression and submissiveness. We define aggression as a behaviour that denies the rights of others and submissiveness as a behaviour that denies our own rights. What does an assertive behaviour involve? It involves asking or stating our desires clearly and directly while also taking into account the feelings and rights of others.

Behaving assertively is crucial because we don't exist in a wonderland where everybody is thoughtful and emphatic. Not everyone will remember that they talk to another person who is equally important and consider your feelings.

Assertive behaviour lets you stand up for yourself even when dealing with a bull in a china shop. As children, we're taught to be obedient. Adults provide us with a list of dos and don'ts in order to protect us. When we grow up, submissiveness is no longer a beneficial approach. It invites others to disregard our basic needs and ask for too much and too

often. Acting submissively often leads to feelings of resentment, anger, and frustration. Conversely, while aggression may make you feel powerful at the moment, it has a high potential to backfire. If you disregard the rights of others, there will be few people willing to cooperate with you or engage in a conversation with you. Now that we understand the beauty of the balanced approach, let me share some techniques for implementing it.

## **How to be more assertive?**

### **Master saying "no"**

because it is a direct, honest way of turning a request down. It is a full sentence, and you don't have to explain yourself. For example, imagine your relative/friend asking you for a loan to buy a Gucci bag. If you lend them money, you will not be able to afford tickets for your favourite band's concert. Saying "no" is a simple answer that will save you from getting your dreams shattered.

### **Make simple, direct statements**

of what you (do not) want to happen. When somebody says that you should eat more because you're too skinny, you could answer, "I don't want to eat more." There is no need for additional information. One direct statement is more than enough, especially at the beginning of your assertive journey.

### **Practise "I" statements**

To make this kind of statement, you must take responsibility for your feelings and focus on facts. This way, you're able to bring up the issue or respond without sounding accusatory. This way, the addressee doesn't feel judged and is less likely to get defensive. For example, instead of saying, "You make me angry when you don't help me with hanging

ornaments up on the Christmas tree. You are a couch potato!" you could say, "I'm upset when I'm the only one decorating the Christmas tree." If someone joins you, you can say, "I felt good when you helped me."

### **Mind your body language**

Not only what you say but how you say it has an influence on delivering your message. Initially, focus primarily on maintaining eye contact, keeping your head up and leaning slightly towards the recipient of your message. This way, you seem friendly and self-assured at the same time.

### **Use empathic assertion**

It consists of three key components: empathic recognition, content and action. Empathic recognition signifies recognising and remarking other person's feelings. Content is expressing our feelings or opinions. Action denotes stating what we want to happen. To show you the possible use of emphatic assertion, we will get familiar with "Bridget Jones's Diary". Bridget arrives late at the meeting. Right away, she is asked an open question about her love life. She is also reminded of the time passing as a suggestion to start a family instead of focusing on her career. She knows the question is inappropriate and invades her privacy. She got embarrassed and mumbled "fine" quickly as a response to the question. Suppose we alter the story by granting Bridget the ability to use an emphatic assertion. In this scenario, she can say, "I notice that you all are curious about my love life, but I feel uncomfortable when you ask me questions or comment on it. Therefore, I would like you all to stop doing it." Her response is kind yet resolute, and it has the potential to improve her situation.

### **Rehearse what you're about to say**

You could think of possible scenarios – what someone might say and what could be your response. When you know what to tell them, go in front of a mirror and say it out loud several times with as much confidence as possible. You can even take this acting challenge to a higher level! Reach out to your friends and ask them for help. Practise the whole scenario together – look them in the eye and speak like they were the person you're preparing to talk to. This way, you can receive feedback from someone friendly that might help you develop a new way of communicating.

What can you do if assertiveness isn't the solution in a certain situation and somebody keeps getting up your nose? You can use another technique called escalating assertion. The easiest way to do it is by repeating your previous statement and following it with the consequence of somebody's action. Imagine a scenario where you're having a festive dinner with your family, and during the meal, your uncle makes a rude comment about your weight, stating that you ate too much and are fat. You told him, "I want you to stop calling me fat." Then he said, "Oh, don't be so sensitive. I'm telling you the truth. You eat too much, and that makes you fat." This time, you added the consequence, "I want you to stop calling me fat. I'm going to stop responding to you if you're not able to respect that". Despite this, he made the same comment again, so you followed through on your promise and ignored him. Remember that "Rome was not built in a day" – behaving assertively won't happen overnight. From my experience, it is not a piece of cake at the beginning. Practising assertiveness during Christmas is a great start. Someone may feel confused or upset with the changes, but your relatives are probably less threatening to you than your professor, boss or colleague. Take your time to get your hand in it. I assure you that it is worth the effort.

Today, you've become familiar with assertiveness in a nutshell. However, remember that it is a vast subject with numerous techniques to explore. Therefore, I encourage you to delve deeper into it once you feel confident enough to do so. Good luck and... Merry Christmas!

## **Glossary #4**

**assertiveness** – being confident in and not afraid to say what you want or believe

**backfire** – to achieve a result opposite to your plans

**diligently** – carefully and with a lot of hard work

**disregard** – pay no attention to, ignore

**escalating assertion** – a communication strategy or interpersonal skill in which an individual gradually increases their assertiveness in response to unmet needs or boundaries being violated

**empathic recognition** – understanding and acknowledging the emotions, feelings, or perspectives of another person in a compassionate and empathetic manner

**in a nutshell** – in short

**obedient** – doing, or willing to do, what you have been told to do by someone in authority

**rehearse** – practise, repeat

**self-assured** – confident in yourself and your abilities

**submissiveness** – obey or yield to someone else

## Sources

Doverspike, W. F. (2009, May). How to be more assertive.

<http://drwilliamdoverspike.com/>

Garner, E. (2012). Assertiveness - Re-claim your assertive birthright. Eric Garner & Ventus Publishing Aps. 2.

Burr, W. R. (1990). Beyond I-Statements in Family Communication.

Family Relations, 39(3), 266. <https://doi.org/10.2307/584870>

Being assertive: Reduce stress, communicate better. (2013, 13 marca).

[mayoclinic.org. https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/assertive/art-20044644](https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/assertive/art-20044644)

# Festive Stress

By Julia Nowakowska

Every Christmas movie, song and story is the same – people are portrayed as the happiest and the most loving beings who are overjoyed to be with their family and tend to forgive each other for any mistakes or wrongdoings. Somehow, we are forced by pop culture to be happy and grateful during Christmas, which leads to feelings of guilt or insecurity when stressed about the holidays. Surprisingly, it is not that uncommon to feel bad at Christmas time. Why are we ashamed of our feelings, then? What is so-called "festive stress" or "Christmas pressure"?

At first, let's discuss the "Christmas miracle" phenomenon. It is present in almost every festive-themed story, including classics like "A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens. We all know that the main character in this novel transforms into a caring and sympathetic man after meeting

Christmas ghosts. The pattern is simple – all the disagreements and conflicts must be forgotten and turned around. Pop culture has a great impact on everyone – it somehow shapes our perception of reality and our views on behaviour or values standards. That is why we always have in mind the picture of a joyous Christmas – it is something we know is desirable. We see it as something obvious, safe, and necessary – which makes it a universal appearance related to the impact of pop culture on ourselves. So, what should we do if we just don't like Christmas?

There may be a variety of reasons for not enjoying the holidays. Sometimes, the reason is family – not everyone likes spending time with their relatives due to disagreements, generation gaps or even trauma. It causes a big pressure, often connected to the urge to make everyone happy, even if we are not. This behaviour could have origins in our hidden beliefs and patterns. The personal conviction of being bound to appreciate our families solely for existing is strong in society. So, it is more than important to understand that our family members are just ordinary people who do not have any right to harm us. It is difficult to forgive them just because of the blood ties, and in some cases, the only solution is therapy – without it, you will always be self-disappointed and feel guilty for no reason. If the mere thought of seeing your family makes you stressed, it might be time to consider meeting a psychologist.

But what if our festive stress is more related to pre-Christmas time? Sometimes, we want to make everything match up to excessive expectations, which could change holidays into an absolute nightmare. Many people feel compelled to decorate their entire houses, clean every nook and cranny, and cook an excessive amount of food, yet it is never enough. They strive for perfection obsessively, but their imaginary

standards are always too high. The reason for this behaviour may be, for example, being a workaholic and not taking enough rest.

If you experience difficulty in resting, then maybe you should consider learning some relaxation techniques. It could be hard to allow yourself to take a break when you lead an intense lifestyle, so even breathing exercises are worth a try. You can also make a list of things you must do and stick to it. In this case, getting out of your comfort zone may be helpful.

Last but not least, Christmas could be stressful because of spending money – during holidays, we are sometimes forced to buy gifts that strain our budget. In this case, the solution is simple: try making presents yourself or look for good quality second-hand things. Many people appreciate these gifts and even think they are more valuable. Remember that Christmas is also for you, and there is no need to buy things that will cause money-related stress. It is not worth it – the festive season is never a reason to make your life harder and more stressful, even just for a month.

By and large, there is no reason to feel guilty if you don't like Christmas time. It may be a good time to think about your needs and feelings. Don't pretend to be someone you're not, and be kind to yourself because you have a right to feel down during the holiday season. Just remember – you don't have to please anyone by making yourself feel bad or uncomfortable. And, in any capacity, may you have a Merry Christmas!

## **Glossary #5**

**blood ties** – connections based on being biologically related

**comfort zone** – conditions in which you feel comfortable are not actively challenged

**conviction** – strong belief in something

**excessive** – something that goes beyond what is considered normal, reasonable, or necessary

**feel compelled to (do something)** – feel the need to do something

**festive stress** – great worry caused by the celebration of special occasions, such as Christmas

**wrongdoing** – bad behaviour

# Lifestyle Corner

## Tricky Ads

By Wiktoria Wiśniewska

Before Christmas, the number of creative commercials (in the negative sense of this word) increases. Every single one of those commercials states that their product is the best of the best, and you have to buy, for example, this specific robot vacuum! And deceived people, like my poor grandma, who watch too much television or spend excessive time on

social media, are convinced of the superiority of advertised devices. Unfortunately, marketers aren't always telling the truth.

My grandma was so determined to buy this specific robot vacuum that it took me an hour to change her mind. After this thought battle, we researched robot vacuums, and it turned out that the most-advertised robot on TV is also the newest on the market. Thus, almost nobody has it yet, and there are no opinions about it online. It could be a total waste of money! Or not, but buying a well-known and well-working device is better than a complete mystery. In the end, Grandma agreed to buy a better-known vacuum cleaner.

What I learned today – while buying presents for Christmas (or just doing shopping overall), be mindful of what you and your loved ones spend money on, and **don't let commercials fool you!**

## Pun Please!

My 2024 resolution is to be more assertive and confident... if that is OK for you guys.

How many psychotherapists does it take to change a lightbulb? Just one, so long as the light bulb *\*wants\** to change.

## Whimsical Language

### Idioms

**Get up someone's nose** – to annoy or irritate someone

**Practice makes perfect** – the more you practise something, the better you become at it, continuous effort and repetition are important in achieving excellence

**Storm in a teacup** – a lot of fuss or commotion about a minor or trivial matter

**Piece of cake** – Something very easy to do

**A bull in a china shop** – someone who is careless, clumsy, or awkward in their actions, often causing damage or disruption

## Proverbs

**If at first you don't succeed, try, try again** – perseverance is key to success, if you encounter failure or difficulty, it encourages you to keep trying and not give up easily

**Fortune favours the bold** – taking risks and being bold in your actions can lead to success

**Make hay while the sun shines** – take advantage of the favourable conditions or opportunities while they last

**Nothing ventured, nothing gained** – to achieve anything, you must take risks

**There's no time like the present** – the best time to do something is right now, it's better to choose action rather than procrastination

## Tricky words

**Commotion** – a state of confused and noisy interruption

**Continuous** – without interruption

**Excellence** – outstanding or extremely good

**Perseverance** – doing something despite difficulty

**Trivial** – of little worth or importance

**Venture** – a new activity, usually in business, that involves risk

# Recipe for a winter spiced tea

## Ingredients:

- black tea (portion for one person)
- 2 slices of ginger
- cinnamon stick
- 4 cloves
- orange slice
- apple slice
- lemon slice
- a pinch of chilli
- honey (adjust to taste)
- for decoration, optional: fresh raspberry

## Method:

Brew your tea of choice, putting inside a cinnamon stick, chopped ginger, and cloves.

Give tea time to brew.

Add slices of apple, orange, lemon and a pinch of chilli.

Sweeten the tea with honey. If one teaspoon of honey is not enough, you can add more.

Serve the tea with fresh raspberries (optional).

*Enjoy!*

# Culture Club

## **"Rise of the Guardians"**

Recently, I watched an animated fantasy film, which may not have been the best use of my time before Christmas, considering I had several university tests to study for. However, I watched "Rise of the Guardians," and it was pure entertainment. The characters were all friends of children, including Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, and Jack Frost. They reminded me of the times when I was happy as a child. The movie had a few morals, but I'll leave it up to you to discover them. It was enchanting, sweet, and just wonderful to watch.

As I watched it, I felt a bit like I was watching an Avengers movie, with the battle of good and evil. It had a slightly dark tone, and some children might be scared, but we are not kids, so we can handle it. It just makes you feel warm, like a good family film. It also feels empowering and full of positive energy, making it enjoyable to watch. I recommend not watching it alone, as it is, after all, a family movie. Happy watching!

## **"How to Win Friends and Influence People"**

I have to admit that I read the book "How to Win Friends and Influence People" by Dale Carnegie some time ago. It helped me decide if it was a

valuable read. It's good when you read something and want to remember it. It isn't good if you forget how the book made you feel. This book left me with a warm feeling. It is not a scientific book, and we should not treat it like one. Even though it was first published in 1936, it is not outdated. It is undoubtedly a self-help book that provides advice about life. You may wonder what good it can bring when it's almost 90 years old, but when we analyse it from today's perspective and with some knowledge of social psychology, we may find that there's actually something in it. It is short and easy to read, written in simple language, making it fun to read. It is a base for negotiation techniques, talking, making people feel good around you, literally existing in society and being liked. Carnegie gives us a few rules, one of which is that if you want to be liked, do not criticise. It is an essential book to read and recommended for almost everybody. You may read it with a hot chocolate with snow over the window and feel that you are not wasting time. It may be your way of fighting procrastination. I hope I planted that vision in your minds. I know that many of you will have the will to change something in your life or to develop yourself (these two may be the same thing) as the New Year is coming. This book may be a good read to start your journey of self-development or to enrich it. I, with a clear conscience, can recommend it.

Reviews by Jan Wolicki

## **Last but not least...**

**TED Talk**

**“Santa Claus & Finding Meaning”**

George Blythe, October 2019

A wonderful close-up look at Santa Claus. George takes us through his three decade career as Santa Claus, touching on the real reason he still believes....and it's not for the gifts under the tree, but the joy and love of the children.

Link: <https://youtu.be/s5OdV3qX63M?si=MPn3oMyDiEMg8PvY>

## Did you know...

**Christmas Crunch** is a festive popular snack described as buttery, crispy puffed corn paired with gluten-free pretzels, peanuts, melted white chocolate, holiday M&M's, and other sprinkles but also **Christmas Crunch** is the time right before Christmas when a lot of families do most of their shopping, cleaning, cooking and all of the important chores in a last-minute rush. It is also used by retailers to describe the immense crowd in their shops just before Christmas.

# Find us elsewhere too!

## Visit PsychLingo Online

Link: <https://linktr.ee/psychlingo>

## Check out our Instagram

Username: psychlingo

## Write to PsychLingo

Email us to: [psychlingo@aps.edu.pl](mailto:psychlingo@aps.edu.pl)

# Our Staff

**Editor-in-Chief:** Jan Wolicki

**Deputy Editor-in-Chief:** Martyna Lekan, Julia Nowakowska

**Editor Assistant:** Amelia Anielska-Mazur

**Art Direction:** Martyna Lekan

**Typesetter:** Martyna Lekan

**Column Writer:** Wiktoria Wiśniewska

**Lifestyle pages design:** Joanna Łukasiewicz

**Glossary and Exercises Editor:** Amelia Anielska-Mazur

**Article Writers:** Joanna Łukasiewicz, Ola Dziubak, Martyna Lekan,  
Karolina Tomczak, Weronika Piebiak, Julia Nowakowska

**Editorial and linguistic supervision:** Anna Treger, MA and the Maria  
Grzegorzewska University Professor Bronisław Treger, PhD