

your update

Activities and inspiration
for women in prison:
Christmas 2020



Sally's story

Can time in prison change things for the better?

This person's story proves it can...

In court. In transit. Wow, what's just happened to me? The van stops, I can't see much. Doors open. A voice, "name please miss".

In reception words are being spoken to me, I don't remember what they say, I can't take anything in. I don't remember what they say except "please stand there miss". Flash. My photos taken and then words that just register "please carry this with you at all times and remember your number".

Onwards to the first night, given some food that you don't remember eating, probably because you didn't, allowed a quick phone call to a loved one, then to your cell. Sobbing, exhausted, what happens next?. I think there was an induction, what was said? I don't remember, my heads completely gone. I'm scared I will be hurt or bullied, I know! I'll stay in my cell, no one can hurt me there. My first week, I don't know what's happening, I just go out for my food and hurry back to my cell. Please someone help me. How do I phone my family? What's canteen? Where's healthcare? What about my home? My rent? I have debts. What am I going to do? I feel worthless. It would be better to end it. I have so much anger, frustration, my emotions are everywhere. How can I release this pressure? I am misunderstood. I am now on an ACCT for my own safety, please help me. Who

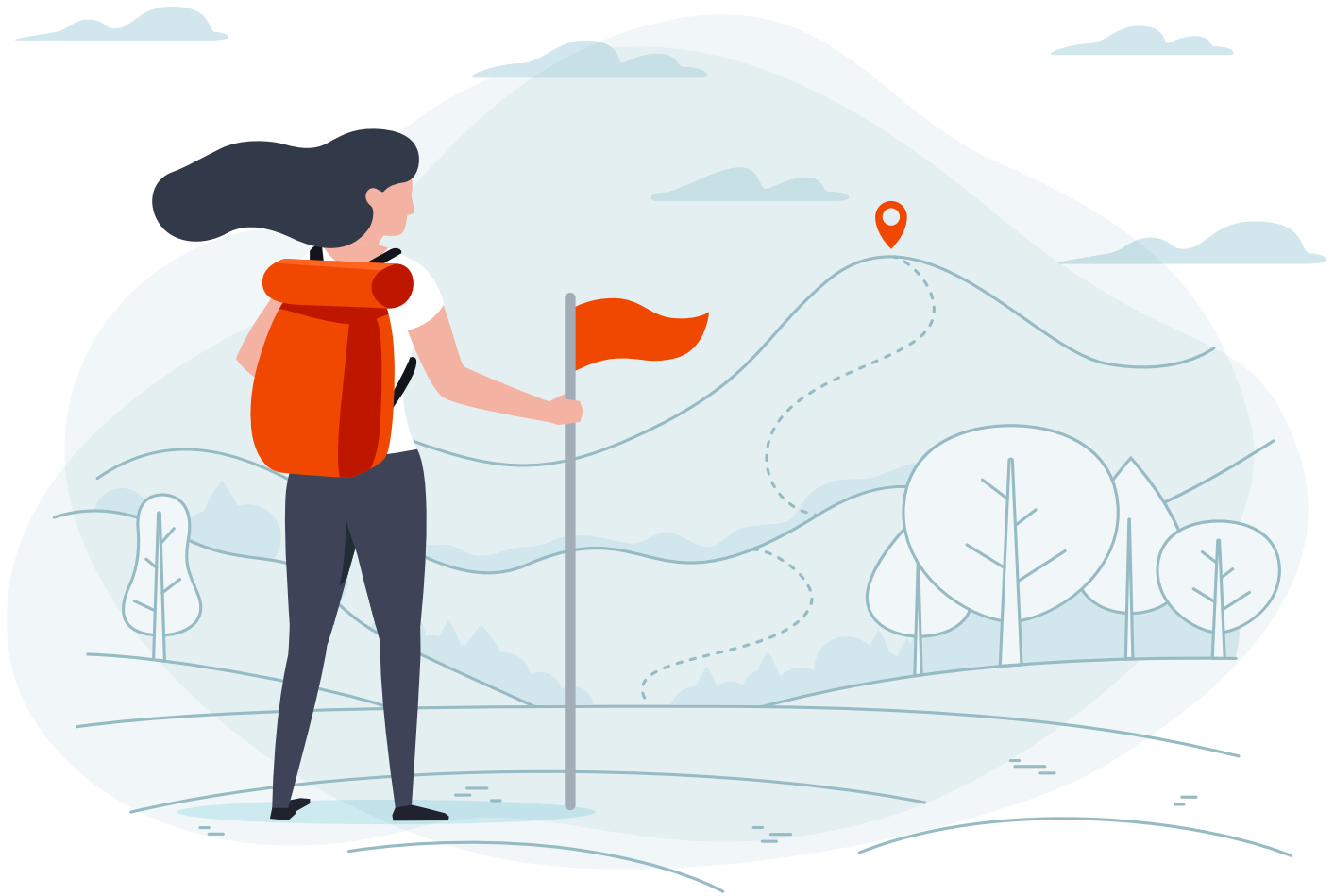
will listen to me and not judge me? Who will show me empathy? I just want to feel safe; I need to get through this. Please understand me and my issues. I want to be well again, I need consistency. I want a future, but I don't know where to start.

This is how every prisoner feels when they come to prison, no matter how tough you act. We have feelings, we are human. There are people within the service that do listen and do care, that do reach a connection with us. Offender manager unit, who are with you through your journey in prison, to support, to advise, help guide you through rehabilitating and address your crime. A good relationship with these people is very important or even with another professional who shows genuine compassion. Maybe ex-offenders should be employed as staff?

Some of us are harder to reach than others. They put up barriers and can be defensive and horrible to staff but if someone can take the time to build a good, real connection they will discover the good and potential in that person. That is what happened to me.

Prison sounds a really daunting experience but, in many cases, it can be the making of you. To make you take a reality check and a chance to reinvent yourself, to become a better person, stronger, more independent, more educated to leave with a new skill that

'Prison sounds a really daunting experience but, in many cases, it can be the making of you'



could possibly lead you to a job on the outside.

Help and opportunities are readily available from the moment you step through the gate:-

There's Shelter that can help you with your housing issues from the start dependent on the length of your sentence, to help you to keep your home for short sentences or ties up loose end if you have a longer sentence, without building up excess debt. To help you with debt problems instead of burying your head in the sand as many do, but to tackle the debt with you and on many occasions allow you to leave prison debt free.

There are counselling facilities on a one to one basis to help with problems that you might have already had when you first

came to prison but have never addressed. Mental health workers, DARS for drug and alcohol issues, Shannon Trust to help you read and write. Education, to help you get qualifications in those subjects you didn't get at school but have no realised they need on the outside, Maths and English. Once mastered it leads you to be able to learn Hair and Beauty, IT, horticulture amongst others, gaining valuable qualifications leading you to a brighter future once released.

There is also a company called Phoenix Futures who work with the ladies here at Styal by liaising, if needed, with social services to maintain those very important family ties and organising family events throughout the year.

We have a gym, so you can keep or

'You must work hard to address your offending behaviour, to rehabilitate, to having a job to earn monies for your canteen'

get fit working out. It's also good for your mental health and ladies here have gained fitness qualifications to allow them to be a personal trainer on the outside.

We have our own Chapel to maintain your religious beliefs. Somewhere you are able to go to have quiet time to reflect and remember loved ones, to talk to the chaplaincy and take part in courses that they run like victim awareness, peace makers and bible studies to name a few.

During your journey here at Styal you progress to become enhanced.

Enhancement depends on your behaviour. Once enhanced you can have further benefits like extra visits from family or friends, a bigger clothes allowance and a chance to live in one of the self-catering houses to allow you to become more independent with no bang up like on a wing when you are in a cell rather than in a room that you can make more homely and mix for longer times with other ladies during the evening in the house.

You must work hard to address your offending behaviour, to rehabilitate, to having a job to earn monies for your canteen to be able to buy things for yourself.

You can also help others along the way by becoming a peer mentor or even a listener for the Samaritans both of which gives you great satisfaction and achievement that you may have made someone's life a little easier.

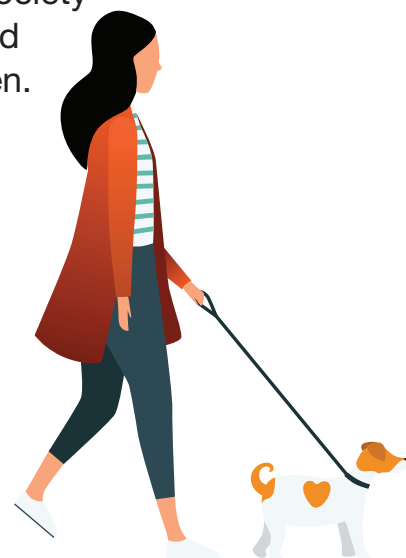
I think an achievement for yourself that you are always proud of, is to become an open house prisoner and be allowed to live in the open house here at Styal which is a very trusted opportunity. From

the open house you can work in the well know Clink restaurant training to be a chef or silver service waitress gaining further qualifications in fine dining. Also, once you are open you can, after the clink, progress to working in the community and there are designated staff that work with you to get outside various jobs such as Max Spielman, Greggs, Premier Inn, Co-op, Subway, McDonald's, Mottram Hall to name a few and many of these jobs can lead to permanent positions.

Now for those of us with longer sentences there is the chance to be able to put forward for a Hardman Trust award. This is a charity based organisation set up by business people to award money to prisoners to be able to start their own business on release. I have been lucky enough to be awarded two Hardman trust awards which, when I am released in a few months, I will set up my own mobile professional dog grooming salon, having been able to buy all of my equipment thanks to the Hardman Trust. I also gained my Diploma Level 3 professional dog grooming certificate through the education department here at Styal.

So you can see if you want something and you are willing to get up and get it, to work hard, be true to yourself and others, then you will get all the help and support you need to progress and rehabilitate yourself back into society and take that second chance you are given.

'When I am released in a few months, I will set up my own mobile professional dog grooming salon'



A story of kindness

How one good act can lead to another, and another, and...

He almost didn't see the old lady stranded on the side of the road but even in the dim light of day he could see that she needed help. So he pulled up in front of her Mercedes and got out, his Pontiac still spattering as he approached her and even with the smile on his face she was worried.

No one had stopped to help her for the past hour or so, was he going to hurt her? He didn't look safe, he looked poor and hungry. He could see that she was frightened, he knew how she felt. He said, "I am here to help you ma'am why don't you wait in the car where it's warm btw my names Khalifa". Well all she had was a flat tyre but for an old lady that was bad enough. Khalifa crawled under the car looking for a place to put the jack skimming his knuckles time or two and soon he was able to change the tyre but he had to get dirty and his hands hurt.

As he was tightening up the loose nuts she rolled down the window and began to talk to him, she told him that she was from Babylon and was only just passing by, she couldn't

thank him enough for coming to her aid. Khalifa just smiled as he closed the trunk. She asked him how much she owed him. Any amount would have been okay with her, she already imagined all the awful things that could have happened to her, but Khalifa never thought twice about being paid, this was not a job to him, this was helping someone in need and God knows, many had helped him in the past. He had lived his whole life that way and it never occurred to him to live differently.

He told her that if she really wanted to pay him back, the next time she saw someone in need she would help them and Khalifa added, "pray for me". He waited until she started her car and drove off then disappeared into the Twilight. A few miles down the road the lady saw a small cafe where she thought she'd grab a bite to eat. It was a dingy looking restaurant, the waitress came over with the towel to dry her wet hair, she was beautiful. The woman noticed she must have been at least eight months pregnant but even with the strains of her job she never

let the smile on her face fade.

After the lady had finished her meal the waitress had went to get change for her £100 bill. By the time the waitress had returned with the change, the woman had slipped out the door. The waitress noticed a note with £400 bills inside, there were tears in her eyes when she read what the lady had wrote; "You don't owe me anything, I've been there too and someone helped me out the way I'm helping you if you really want to pay me back here is what you should do don't let this chain of love and with you".

Well there were tables to clear and bowls to fill but the waitress made it through another day. That night she lay in bed thinking about what the woman had said, how could you have known how badly they needed the money with the baby due next month? After she finished her Prayer she turned to her husband and whispered soft and low, "everything is going to be alright, I love you Khalifa" -

Anon



Never give up!

This story of two frogs shows why...

Two frogs hop into the cool of a dairy on a hot day. They perch on the rims of churns of milk, wondering whether they might have a drink. Suddenly disaster strikes - they both lose their footing and fall in! The churns are too deep and the sides are too steep for them to be able to climb out.

First frog, Bert, swims around in circles for a while. But soon he says to himself. "What is the point of all this swimming? There is no way out. I may as well stop and let myself drown because that is what will happen eventually in any case."

So he stops swimming, sinks to the bottom of the churn and drowns.

Meanwhile, second frog, Ernie. Is swimming round in circles in his churn next to him.

"There doesn't seem to be a way out", he says to himself, "but I am not dead yet. I'll just keep swimming round in circles as long as I can."

So he swims and swims. Blimey this is hard and tedious", he thinks, as he passes a mark on the wall of the churn for the

umpteenth time.

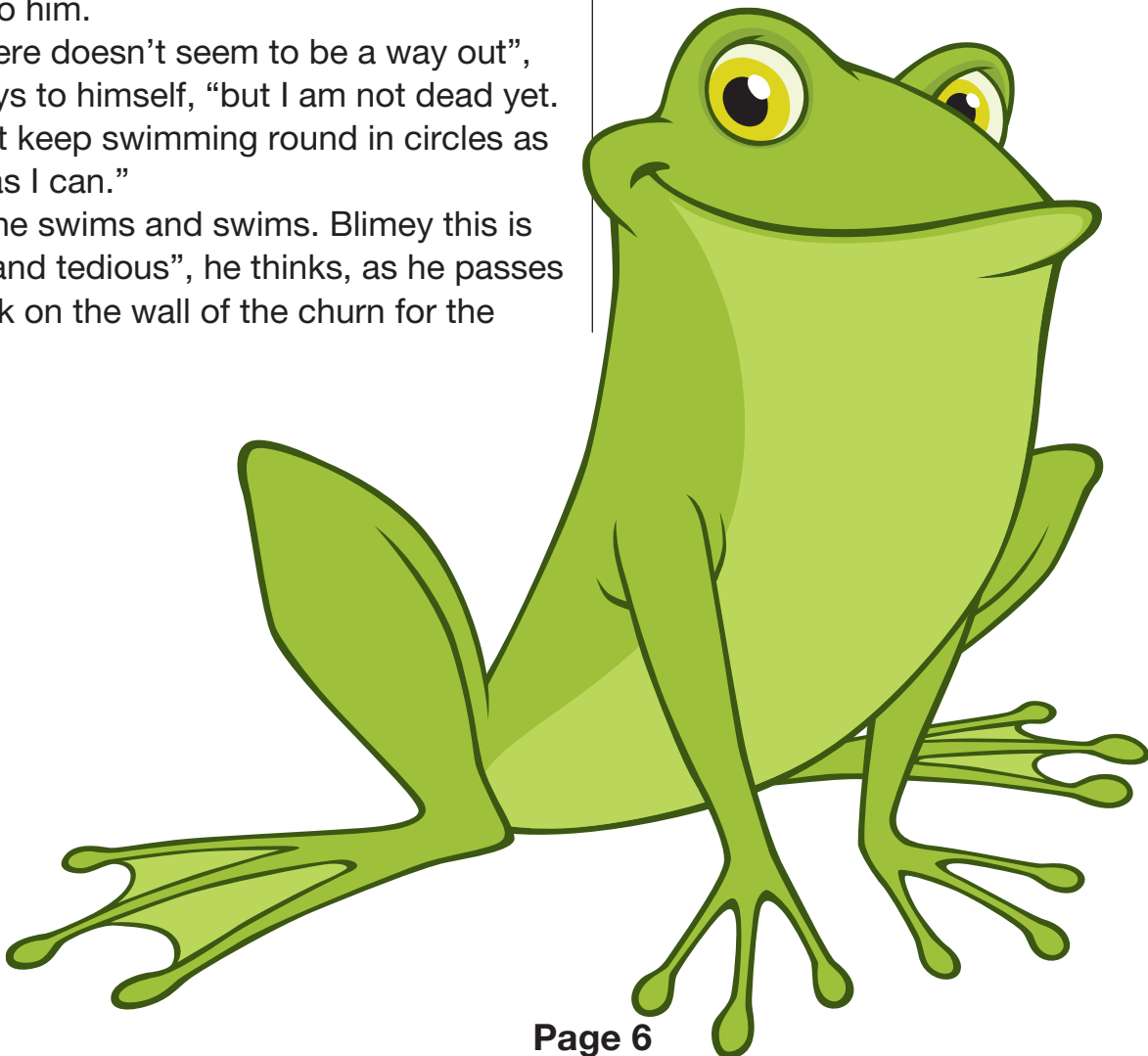
"I wonder how Bert is getting on, he thinks after a while, and shouts, "Bert, Bert!"

There is no reply from the other churn, just silence.

Ernie feels very lonely and sad. But he keeps on swimming.

And then the milk gets very thick indeed and Ernie finds himself standing safely on a solid yellow surface. He hops easily out of the churn to freedom. His legs, flailing for so long have churned the milk to butter.

He is still sad about Bert but decides to live his best life in honour of him because he knows that's what his good friend would have wanted...



My experience of prison as a transgender man

Dalton Harrison on the challenges he faced...



2017 was my first Christmas inside.

It was my first sentence. I was a transgender man in a female prison. I was feeling out of place and then I became a gym orderly met an amazing group of women. Especially one who I fell in love with. My first Christmas was actually great! I got two cakes made for me on the wing and even had a party with people singing happy birthday, as I'm a Christmas day baby. I know I was lucky to find love and support.

The Christmas in 2018 was just as good and I was so blessed to have my partner. I found even in the moments when we all let ourselves think to what could have been if we were outside, what we had found as a group was so powerful and could carry us through. It's so important to find your support, it could be one person. It could be a listener. It could be a kind word from an officer who checks in on you. It could be the women on your wing. But above all believe in yourself - believe in what you have to offer as a person.

My 2019 Christmas outside has better food, I can't lie! But I have friends who I met inside and my partner who may still be in, but we still laugh on the phone and love.

I have achieved so much since leaving prison. I started a poetry and performance collective called StandFast and we support each other in so many ways as well as helping others understand the prison system through plays, poetry, and art. I have given talks in universities and worked with PET raising money and looking into changing how they deal with prisoners and education. I have helped the Samaritans improve the way they train to help people inside as well as helping researchers who want to improve the way prisons are run. I have written for magazines and newspapers. My poetry is now published, and I am in the process of getting my own poetry collection published.

The most important thing to me is knowing that anyone reading this knows that you as you are now will change. Life will move forward and you will need to be ready. Seek your truth. Reach your own goals. Built yourself back up. Believe you can.

The way I did was through writing and education it helped me look past all I thought I knew and for you it might be something else but above all, remember you are not alone.

Self Care Plan



A self care plan is for you to write down what might help you in a period of crisis. It can include things that you can do to help yourself, as well as things that other people can do, and reminders of where you can get support.

Try to complete this when you're feeling well, but remember it's never too late to start. If you feel comfortable doing so you can complete this with a member of staff, a peer worker, a friend, or talk this through with a member of your family or loved one.

When you're in crisis, reading what you've written below can help you to cope and get the support you need.

What are the warning signs that I am starting to find things difficult? (This could be something like not being able to relax or get to sleep, feeling panicky or anxious, feeling tearful or angry.)

What are the triggers that make me feel stressed? (This could be something like missing a call with your family.)

What have I done in the past that has helped? Do I have any good coping methods? How can I use these in the current situation?

What can I do to calm myself or relax? (This could be something like using a distraction pack or art supplies, or doing some exercise.)

What helpful things can I tell myself when I'm upset or stressed?

Are there people, places or things that could be helpful to think about?

What activities would distract me or keep me busy?

What can I ask other people to do that might help?

How would other people know I am struggling?

People who can support me

Family

Friend

Staff

Me

**Professionals
(e.g. GP,
Probation etc)**

**Other
people**

Self-Soothe Box

Creating a box full of things that make you feel centred, safe, and happy can be a really useful tool and very easy to create. Self-soothe boxes have been known to relax, reduce anxiety and improve mood.

To begin, think about the senses – touch, taste, smell, sound, sight.

Things that stimulate the senses can be a great addition to your box.

Examples of things that could be in your box –

- A soft blanket or piece of material you find comforting
- Fidget Spinners or other distraction materials
- Memories, this could be pictures, letters, or anything else that creates a sense of happy nostalgia
- A list of all your favourite songs – “dance to your own tune, as no one else will”
- Activities such as wordsearches, origami, colouring
- Calming Cards
- Mindfulness or grounding exercises that work for you
- A picture or script of your ‘safe happy place’
- Positive statements or



quotes that make you feel joy, happiness, strong

- A cup – drinking water can be a good way to reduce symptoms of panic/anxiety. Regularly drinking helps steady the rhythm of your breathing. Keep a cup in

your box to remind you to keep drinking

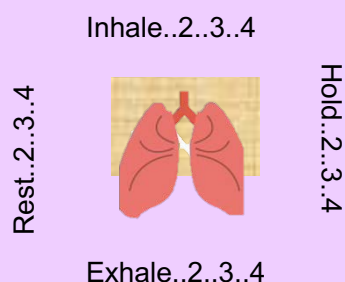
Your box can be yours to do what you want with – it is personal and can contain anything to make you happy.

You can ask your Safer Custody team for materials.

Calming Cards

Square Breathing

Square breathing, or box breathing, is a technique used to regulate breathing when in a state of panic. It has been known to improve sleep.



The Alphabet Game

The alphabet game can be a great grounding technique. You should work your way through the alphabet, finding things in your room that begin with that letter. If you can't find one, move onto the next letter and come back.

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

5,4,3,2,1

When you're panicking and anxious, it can be helpful to bring yourself back to the present. To do this, try this technique.

5 Things I Can See...
4 Things I Can Hear...
3 Things I Can Touch...
(Touch Them!)
2 Things I Can Smell...
1 Big Deep Breath...

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

This technique might sound a bit complicated, but it's actually super easy and effective. All you need to do is tense and relax each muscle group. Repeat as much as you need.

Tense your *Forehead*, hold for five seconds... Relax
Tense your *Jaw*, hold for five seconds... Relax
Tense your *Shoulders*, hold for five seconds... Relax
Tense your *Arms*, hold for five seconds... Relax
Tense your *Bum*, hold for five seconds... Relax
Tense your *Legs*, hold for five seconds... Relax
Tense your *Feet*, hold for five seconds... Relax

Apple Technique

This is a technique recommended by professionals to cope with feelings and symptoms of anxiety. There are five stages to the technique which you can find below.

Acknowledge – Notice your anxiety

Pause – Don't react

Pull Back – Tell yourself that it's the anxiety talking, remind yourself it's just a feeling.

Let Go – The feeling will pass, just let go

Explore – Explore the present, notice your breathing and your surroundings



Workout

Exercise releases endorphins, these are scientifically proven to improve mood and reduce anxiety. Exercising can also aid sleep. Below are some exercising that don't need a lot of space and are easy for any skills level.

10 x Jumping Jacks
30 Second Wall Sit
10 x Squats
30 Seconds On-the-Spot Jogging
10 x Lunges
30 Seconds Burpees
Repeat 5 times

Yoga

Yoga practice has been used for many years as a method of calming yourself down and reducing anxiety. Below are some easy yoga poses to replicate in your room.



Positive Affirmations and Mindfulness

The way we speak to ourselves and the way we view the world around us can have a huge impact on how we feel. Practice mindfulness by being present and concentrating on what is happening around you at the current moment. Say the positive affirmations below out loud to try and reduce some anxiety.

'I am Enough'
'I am Doing My Best'
'Every Moment is a Fresh Start'
'I am Grateful'

Three Good Things

Have a think about three things you are grateful for. This could be something from the past, something you're looking forward to, a person... Anything that makes you feel good. This can be a really useful tool in improving mood, particularly if you're feeling hopeless or too low to engage in other, more intense activities.

Five Senses Game

Look around you. What can you see? What can you smell? What can you hear? What can you touch? What can you taste? Identify as many things as you can for each sense to help ground yourself and bring yourself back to the present.

Poetry kit

Despite The Storms – S.C. Lourie

Despite the storms,
beauty arrives like it was
always going to.

Despite the darkness,
the light returns.

Despite your loss,
your heart will be full again.

Despite the breaking,
your heart will feel like it
belongs in the land of joy
once more.

This is how it will
always be.

Keep living.

www.familyfriendpoems.com/poem/despite-the-storms

Change is a Beautiful Thing – Sabina Laura

Let autumn be proof that

change is a beautiful thing
even though it can be
hard to see at first.

www.familyfriendpoems.com/poem/change-is-a-beautiful-thing

Be Proud of Who You Are – S. Raine

I come with no wrapping
or pretty pink bows.

I am who I am, from
my head to my toes.

I tend to get loud
when speaking my mind.

Even a little crazy
some of the time.

I'm not a size 5
and don't care to be.

You can be you
and I can be me.

I try to stay strong when
pain knocks me down.

And the times that I cry
are when no one's around.

To error is human or so
that's what they say.

Well, tell me who's perfect
anyway.

www.familyfriendpoems.com/poem/be-proud-of-who-you-are

Tips

- Read Poetry
- Pick a subject and Brainstorm
- Use images – 'be a painter with words'
- Don't be afraid to start again and make changes
- Know that it doesn't have to rhyme, but if it does that's great too
- Read your poetry out



TV highlights guide

DRAMA/SOAPS

Call the Midwife Christmas Special
Christmas Day, 7.40pm, BBC1

Doctor Who: Revolution of the Daleks
New Year's Day, 6.45pm, BBC1

Black Narcissus
Sunday 27 December, 9pm. BBC1
An adaptation of Rumer Godden's 1939 novel about growing tensions within a small convent of Anglican nuns.

Eastenders Christmas Special
Christmas Day, 9.10pm, & New Year's Special. New Year's Day, 8pm. BBC1

Emmerdale Christmas Special
Christmas Day, 6pm, ITV

Coronation Street Christmas Special
Christmas Day, 7pm, ITV

ENTERTAINMENT

Strictly: The Christmas Countdown
Christmas Day, 4.45pm, BBC1

Britain's Got Talent Christmas Spectacular
Christmas Day, 8pm, ITV

Big Fat Quiz of the Year 2020
Boxing Day, 9.05pm, Channel 4
Annual quiz hosted by Jimmy Carr

The Great Christmas Bake Off
Christmas Eve, 7.40pm, Channel 4

Blankety Blank
Christmas Day, 7pm, BBC1
Bradley Walsh hosts a special episode of the classic game show.

Taskmaster Festive Special
New Year's Day, 9pm, Channel 4

Michael McIntyre's Christmas Wheel
Christmas Day, 6pm, BBC1



The Repair Shop at Christmas
Boxing Day, 6.45pm, BBC1.

Top of the Pops New Year Special
New Years Eve, 4.20pm, BBC1

The Wall Versus Celebrities
New Years Eve, 6.40pm, BBC1

The Graham Norton New Year's Eve Show
New Years Eve, 10.25pm, BBC1

The Serpent, New Year's Day
9pm, BBC1

COMEDY

Mrs Brown's Boys Christmas Special
Christmas Day, 10pm & New Years Day, 10pm, BBC1

The Vicar of Dibley in Lockdown
Monday 21 December, 8.50pm, BBC1

Ghosts Christmas Special
Wednesday 23 December, 8.30pm, BBC1
A sitcom from the Horrible Histories team with a neat twist on The Christmas Carol story.

Gavin & Stacey Christmas Special
Christmas Eve, 8.40pm, BBC1

DOCUMENTARY

Dancing on Thin Ice with Torvill and Dean
New Years Day, 9pm, ITV
Mixing ice-skating with the dramatic effects of climate change.

Billy Connolly: It's Been a Pleasure
Monday 28 December, 9.30pm, ITV
Highlights of his astonishing career.

Victoria Wood: The Secret List
Christmas Day, 9.10pm. BBC2
Tribute to the late comedy legend, including sketches and unseen insights into her life.

Mortimer and Whitehouse: Gone Christmas Fishing
Wednesday 23 December, 6.30pm, BBC2

MOVIES

Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves
Sunday 20, ITV 4.40pm

Ben-Hur
Christmas Eve, Channel 4, 3.05pm

Some Like it Hot
Christmas Day, BBC2, 1.15pm

Coco
Christmas Day, 3.10pm. BBC1
Animated movie

I Give it a Year
Christmas Day, BBC1, 12.45am

Grease
Boxing Day, BBC1, 5pm

Home Alone 2: Lost in New York
Christmas Day, Channel 4, 5.30 pm

Chitty Chitty Bang Bang
Christmas Day, Channel 5, 3.10pm

Dunkirk
Boxing Day, 9.05pm, BBC1

Penguins of Madagascar
Boxing Day, 10.15am, BBC1

The Holiday
Boxing Day, ITV, 10.45pm

The Sound of Music
Sunday 27, BBC1, 3.45pm

Jurassic World
Sunday 27, ITV 4.40pm

The Karate Kid
Sunday 28, Channel 5, 11.30 am

Wonder Woman
Tuesday 29 December, ITV, 7.30pm

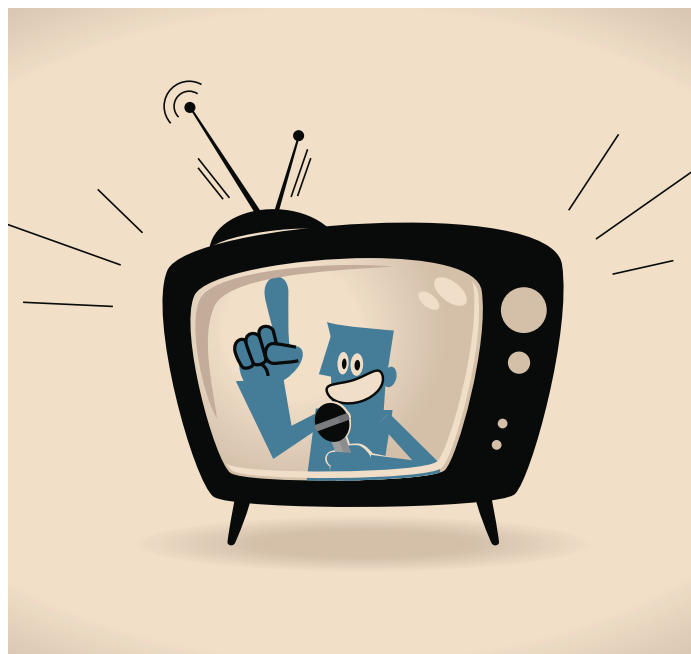
Mr & Mrs Smith
Wednesday 30 December, Channel 4, 12am

Skyfall
New Year's Eve, ITV, 9pm

Diamonds are Forever
New Year's Day, BBC1, 4.30pm

Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves
New Year's Day, 4.30pm, BBC1.

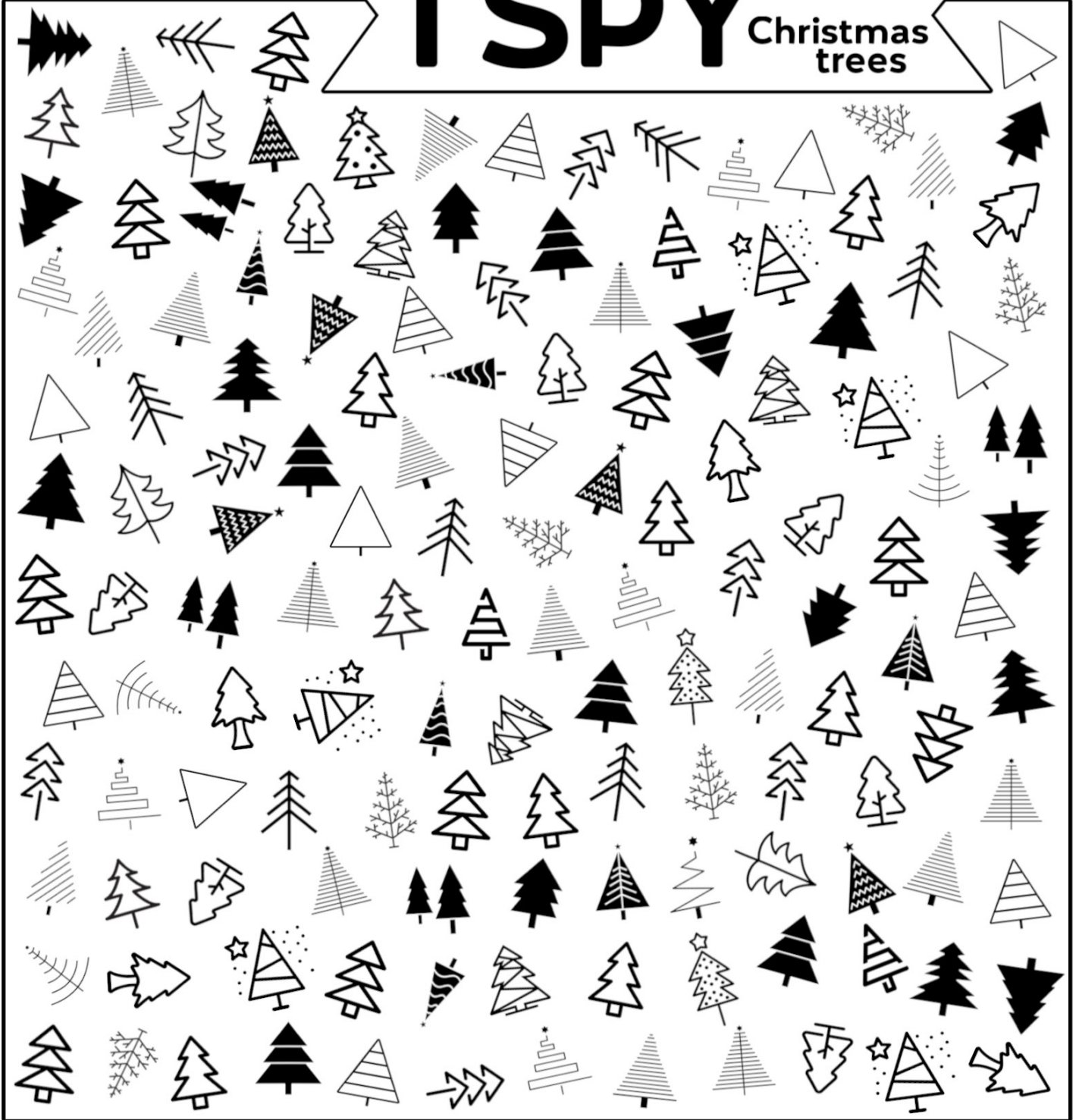
The Greatest Showman
New Year's Day, Channel 4, 5.30pm



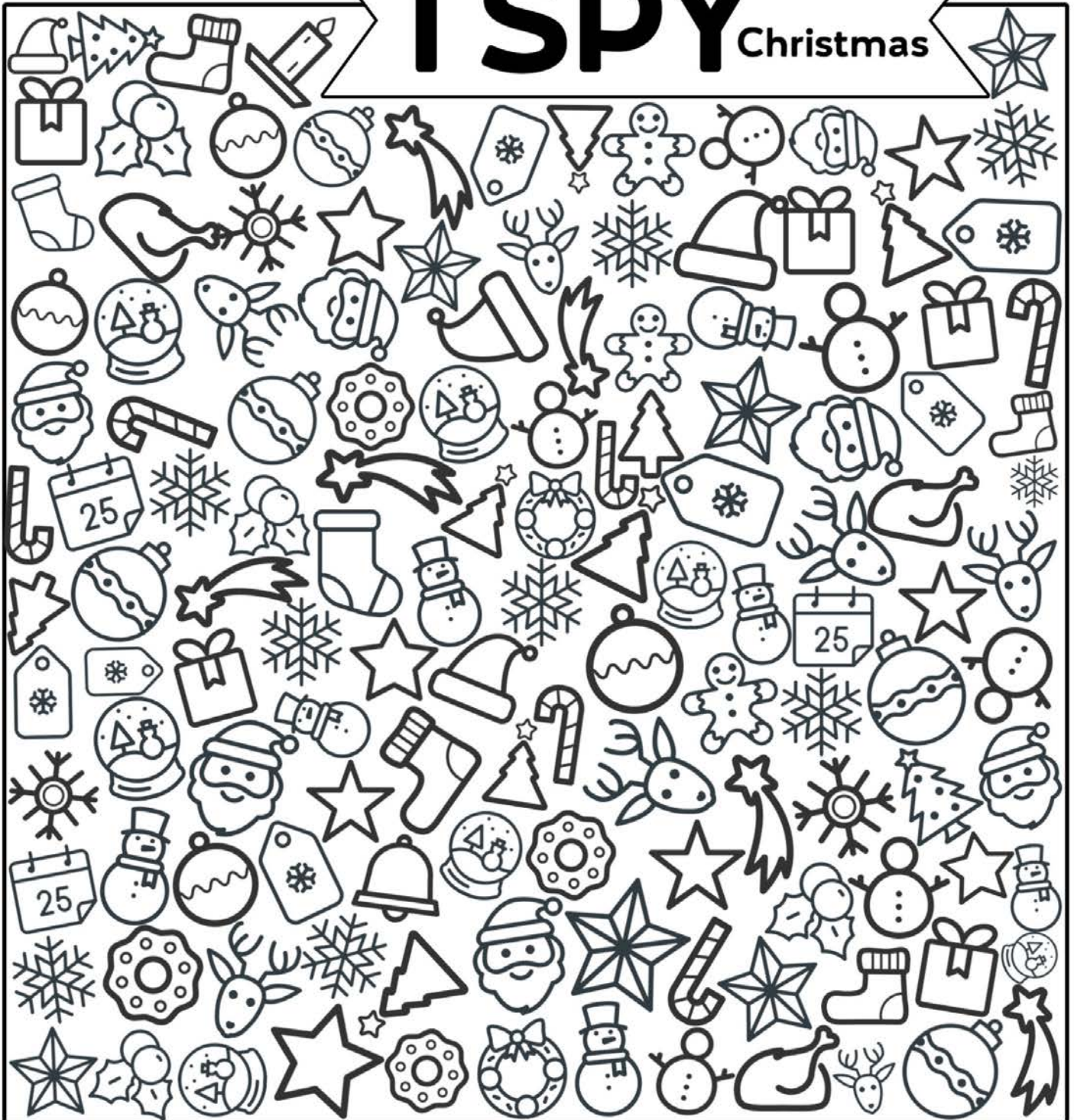


I SPY

Christmas trees



I SPY Christmas



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