Christmas is around the corner and it certainly is a time for giving. Giving can bring us some Christmas joy. It has also brought some extra anxiety as I try to both buy locally and also shop from a distance. Things do not have to be perfect. We are living through a pandemic and our traditions have been put on hold this year so remember to offer yourself lots of compassion as you prepare for the holidays.

Looking through the psychological research on giving, the results of giving leading to happiness are complex. Joy most easily happens when our giving is done with no expectations of anything in return. So giving to a charity for a tax return or giving in order to get something in return does not provide the same happiness as giving, for example, to your young grandchildren to help Santa Claus or giving dry goods to a food bank. Giving with an open heart and loving-kindness is bound to lift your spirits. One of the greatest things you can offer to others is how you accept what they give to you. Accept their gifts with gratitude and love. It will give the giver a great boost of happiness!   For more on the psychological and health benefits of giving, here is an article to read from Berkeley:

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/5_ways_giving_is_good_for_you

Last month, I gave out a challenge to think of one thing a day you can give for free from now until Christmas day. I bet you can think of some others that are even better! Here is a list I came up with:

A smile, a compliment, an ear to listen, an undivided attention

A friendly wave, a recipe, a joke, an "I love you"

An email, a phone call, a text message

Wearing your mask, keeping 6 feet away, washing your hands

An encouraging word, a thank you, a "how are you?"

A word of appreciation, a helpful suggestion, telling someone you care

Space to merge into traffic, volunteering, your place in line

I thought that I might give a different free gift out every day like a backwards Advent calendar…but there are lots of ways to do this. Give out the same thing each day. Give out the one you feel like giving. Or at the end of a day, think about whether you gave out something free: or at the beginning of the day decide what you are in the mood to give out for free. Whatever you want, however you want! Don't feel like doing any of it? That's okay too! Maybe it's your day to get some of the much needed loving-kindness that's passed around during this holiday season.

We have about 300 members in our club. If each of us gave out something free daily for the next 10 days, that would be 3000 acts of kindness in our community. If we were able to do one for each day in December would be 7200 acts of kindness. As it turns out, generosity is contagious so your one act of kindness can multiply many times over making our community a wonderful place to live.

Now, take 3 minutes and watch this video and if it doesn't melt your Grinchy heart, I don't know what will!

https://youtu.be/OnZfRh_7tzw

Next month is January, a month when many of us make resolutions. I will post a 5 minute mental health routine for you to consider trying in the new year that will keep you in much better health while you await a vaccine and spring flowers.