

**Sign up to our Monthly Newsletter**

Hello and welcome to our Christmas special from Deepness Dementia Media. We would like to wish all our readers a very Merry Christmas and a happy and peaceful new year. I am Anne Scott the Newsletter Editor, and I hope you enjoy reading our latest news. Please share this newsletter with your friends family and colleagues.



The newsletter comes out monthly with lots of features and dementia news, including news from Deepness Dementia, the dementia community, dementia activism and dementia rights.

Please send your feedback about the newsletter, whether you liked it or how it could be better. If you want to contribute or send in something for the newsletter, please get in touch with me at [scottanne@live.co.uk](mailto:scottanne@live.co.uk)

Please do circulate and share this newsletter on social media, follow us and if you want to sign up for all our mailings, the buttons above...



Thanks  
Anne Scott

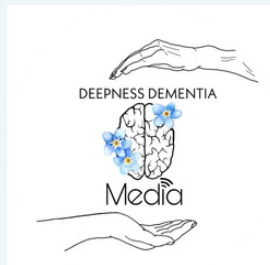


Check out below a list of what is coming up in this Christmas newsletter.

If you are viewing this in a PDF format you can click on the links and skip straight to that article. Otherwise, keep scrolling down.

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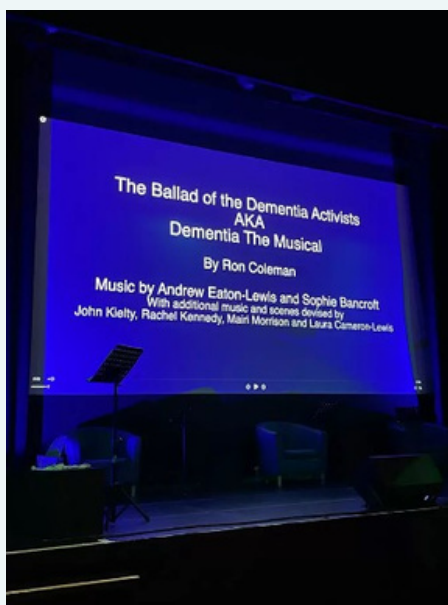
## ‘Dementia the Musical’ awarded funding from Creative Scotland

**Deepness are delighted to announce that 'Dementia the Musical' has successfully been awarded funding from Creative Scotland.**

Written by Ron Coleman, Directed by Magdalena Schamberger and composed by Sophie Bancroft, Dementia the Musical or the 'ballad of Dementia Activists', tells a story of Agnes, James and Nancy who are on trial for the crime of having dementia and not doing what they're told. Can they beat the Rigid System and reclaim their lives and dignity?



Dementia the Musical is based on the campaigning work of three of Scotland's longest serving dementia activists James McKillop, Nancy McAdam and Agnes Houston and the fight they have led to ensure people with dementia have a voice in what happens in their lives.



The Musical is set in the not-too-distant future where the ‘British Bill of Rights’ has replaced the ‘European Convention on Human Rights’ and is being used by organisations and care home owners to deny residents their rights to a family life by allowing the system to control what individuals with dementia can do, where they live, who can visit and when they can visit. The backdrop to the musical sees the three activists being brought to a care home in Dundee to face a tribunal that is accusing them of both not having capacity and of being troublemakers.

A funny and moving production, it tells the history of dementia activism with the voices of real people with dementia shaping its story.



Deepness is one of 14 theatre and dance projects who have received this new funding, a total of £2 million, to enable tours to communities across Scotland. National Lottery funding through Creative Scotland's 'Touring Fund for Theatre and Dance' will *“enable the wide range of new and award-winning productions - modern, physical theatre and spoken word performances for children, young people, adults and families, to visit small, mid and large-scale venues across 2024-2025.”*.

Deepness will use the funding to take Dementia the Musical on a tour throughout Scotland in Autumn 2024.

If you want to find out more about Dementia the Musical you can visit our new Dementia Arts website, by clicking on this link -

<https://www.deepnessdementiaarts.co.uk/theatre/dementia-the-musical>

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# Dementia Arts Festival 2023 - Films shown in La Scala Cinema

## Lost in Stornoway

A film about dementia: living in the moment, and following your own yellow brick road. Funded by Life Changes Trust.

Length - 10 minutes, 28 seconds



## Being the Daughter of the Demented Poet

A film about all the things you feel when your Dad is diagnosed with dementia. Funded by Life Changes Trust.

Length - 8 minutes, 11 seconds







### **Willy Gilder's 'Unheard Voices' - Audrey Ross**

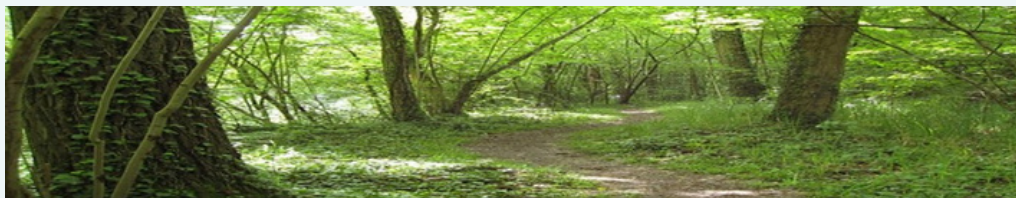
Willy Gilder interviews Audrey Ross as part of his 'Unheard Voices', mini bold mini commission.

Length - 8 minutes, 6 seconds



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# Dealing with Dementia

## Supporting Family members who have a caring role in Scotland Join Us for an online zoom course for Learning, Relaxation, and Connection!

Learn more about boosting your health and wellbeing - Join Izzy Valenti, & Karen Taylor every week for 5 weeks, Both facilitators have had caring responsibilities. Please make sure you can commit to all 5 sessions.

**Dates:** Course 1 starts January 29th 2024, 13:30pm, for 5 weeks same time each Monday for 1.5 hrs.

Course 2 starts February 14th 2024, 10:45am, for 5 weeks for 1.5 hours.

Are you a caregiver supporting a family member with dementia living in Scotland ?

Join us for this zoom course dedicated to your well-being and growth. Discover how to minimize the negative impacts of stress, boost your mood with some easy techniques, and learn how to enhance your mood and wellbeing.

### Activities:

- Engage in interactive discussions.
- Learn relaxation and stress management techniques.
- Participate in mood-boosting exercises.
- Explore the beauty all around us.
- Great company.
- Find peer support.

### Registration:

- **Limited Places:** Reserve your spot by 24th January 2024 for Course 1 or 10th February for Course 2.
- Register by e-mail to [karen@workingtorecovery.co.uk](mailto:karen@workingtorecovery.co.uk) or TEL:- 07884268192
- **Bring an Open Heart.**
- **This is a free event** - funded by About Dementia.

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# Wheel Chair Diaries

## by Ron Coleman

### Wheel Chair Diaries 4

Christmas Eve

“Until you step into the unknown, you don’t know what you’re made of”.

Roy T. Bennet

Finally, Christmas Eve was upon us, and we spent the evening playing games with the kids; remember when I say kids, I am talking about a 35-year-old and three kids in their 20s so of course these games were not played in the gentle fashion that one can associate with younger kids but were played as all out wars.

Where no quarter was either given or asked for. Looking back at it (almost a year later) I know why I did not take part in our Christmas Eve mayhem; simply put I was feeling sorry for myself.

I guess feeling sorry for yourself is something that is normal when you have lost a leg.

Spending Christmas Eve in a wheelchair is not really fun and I was glad when we left and headed back to the hotel. Indeed, spending Christmas Eve in a wheelchair in a hotel is no fun at all. I remember thinking that evening that I just wanted to be home. We often talk about being down, but we rarely talk about what that means. I remember lying awake that night thinking about how black the world was. In other words, how dark my mood was. And being fed up pretending that I was this happy go lucky guy in a wheelchair. I was not only feeling down, I was also feeling angry when I realised I would never play Santa Clause again; I would never creep upstairs with Christmas gifts for children nor drink the glass of whisky or eat the mince pie left for Santa.

It is right that Christmas is a time for reflection, and I spent a great deal of time that night reflecting.







Feeling sorry for yourself is a time limited exercise and by the time I got out of bed the next morning I was back to being my grumpy self. Christmas was simply Christmas. We ate a lovely Christmas dinner, we played board games, we talked about everything and nothing and, when it was over, we went back to our hotel to spend one more night before heading northwards.

Boxing day, we headed off to visit my eldest daughter and her partner near Middlesbrough for a surprise birthday party for my son-in-law's 40th birthday. On the journey to Middlesbrough, I started getting cramp in the bottom of my right foot. Impossible! I didn't have a right foot.....

More to follow.

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# Exercise and Brain Health

## by Michael Cheung

### Is Exercise really good for the brain?

The health benefits of physical activity are undeniable. A recent study based on data published over the past 30 years challenges the famous adage *Mens sana in corpore sano* (a healthy mind in a healthy body - the phrase is widely used in sporting and educational contexts to express that physical exercise is an important or essential part of mental and psychological well-being).

It questions the importance of exercise for both brain health and cognition. Not long after this study was published, a team of

health and neuroscience researchers released the results of the study of over a quarter million people, clearly support the beneficial effects of both moderate and vigorous physical activity on cognitive functioning, started an important scientific debate.



### Is physical exercise 'useless' for cognitive functioning?

This study was published on March 27, 2023. It is a review of 24 meta-analyses (*Meta-analysis* is a quantitative, formal, epidemiological study design used to systematically assess previous research studies to derive conclusions about that body of research), that re-examines data from 11,266 healthy people using this more rigorous approach.

Although almost all of the 24 meta-analyses included in this review concluded that exercise had a positive effect on cognitive function, the authors argue that the analyses performed were suboptimal. For example, they point out that both baseline levels of physical activity and the tendency of the scientific community to publish only significant results were rarely taken into consideration. Once these adjustments were made, the argued that the results suggested that the benefits of exercise are actually smaller than those estimated in the previous meta-analyses and may even be negligible.

Based on these findings, the authors suggested that public health agencies such as the World Health Organization (WHO) should be cautious in stating physical activity improves cognitive health, academic performance, and executive function, “at least until more reliable scientific evidence accumulates.”

One study, consisting of over 90,000 people, was used to identify genetic variations associated with differences in physical activity, as measured by wrist-worn motion sensors (used in *Sleep tracking, Heart rate monitoring, Step tracking, Water sports support, Stroke detection, Coaching support, Breathing support*).

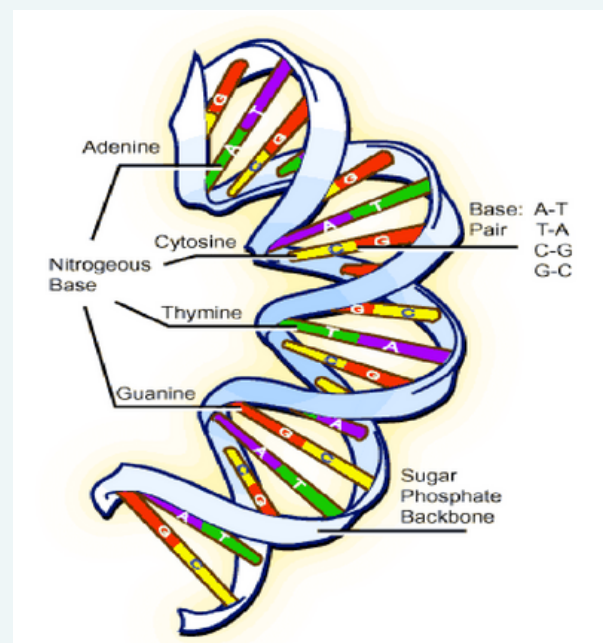


The second, consisting of over 200,000 people, was used to evaluate whether the genetic variations associated with physical activity had a proportional effect on cognitive functioning. Since this was the case, they were able to conclude that there is a causal effect of physical activity on cognitive function.

### Genetics and DNA to the rescue

Another study, is a **genetic** study involving nearly 350,000 people, published in 2023, provide scientific evidence for the cognitive benefits of moderate and vigorous physical activity. This evidence is based on the two-sample Mendelian randomisation method\*, which takes advantage of the random variations in our DNA that occur at conception, before we are even born.

\*When any two humans are compared, 99.9 per cent of their genetic material is identical. DNA can be thought of as a long chain of building bricks, called nucleotides, which varies once every 1,000 bricks between these two humans. There are four types of randomly arranged bricks: thymine, adenine, guanine, and cytosine. Genetic variations can result in, for example, a cytosine brick in one place in one person’s DNA and a thymine brick in the same place in another.



One other study consisting of 80,000 people, was used to identify genetic variations associated with differences in physical activity, as measured by wrist-worn motion sensors.



Another study, consisting of 200,000 people, was used to evaluate whether the genetic variations associated with physical activity had a proportional effect on cognitive functioning. It concluded that there is a causal effect of physical activity on cognitive function.

*If you want to find out more about DNA, here is an excellent link:*

[\*\*Genome Editing with CRISPR-Cas9 - YouTube\*\*](#)

[\*\*DNA replication - 3D - YouTube\*\*](#)

### **Moderate exercise goes a long way**

Physical activity improves cognitive functioning, but more importantly, that the effect of moderate physical activity (brisk walking, cycling) is 1.5 times greater than that of vigorous physical activity (running, playing basketball). This finding highlights that we do not need to push ourselves to the point of exhaustion to get cognitive benefits from exercise. When all types of physical activity were



considered together (including sedentary and light physical activity), some results no longer showed an effect on cognitive function. This finding confirms the importance of achieving at least moderate intensities to reap the cognitive benefits of physical activity.

Engagement in regular bouts of exercise confers numerous positive effects on brain health across the lifespan.

Acute bouts of exercise should improve cognitive function, while long-term exercise training stimulates brain plasticity, improves brain function, and helps to stave off neurological disease.

[\*\*Helping older people stay active at home | The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy \(csp.org.uk\)\*\*](#)





Finally, it's never too late to get started. Several differences may explain the discrepancy in results between the review of meta-analyses and our genetics-based study.

Hasty decisions are never good. However, based on these findings, it appears that physical activity can still be considered beneficial for brain health and cognition. In fact, in the current socio-political climate of mistrust of science, we should not jump to conclusions on the basis of a few studies that contradicts years of research which is based on the very same data. From my own experiences, I recommend we should keep exercising for **brain** health.

As is often the case in science, it is wiser not to make hasty decisions but to wait for additional studies before suggesting changes to physical activity guidelines. For the time being, the accumulation of converging evidence from different research teams should be a prerequisite for changing public health messages. As this article shows, we are nowhere near that point, and the benefits of physical activity on a wide range of physical and mental health outcomes remain undeniable.

## Recipe 1

**Kung Pao Chicken** is a popular Chinese restaurant dish of stir-fried chicken, peanuts and vegetables.

*Serves 2 | Prep time: 15 minutes | Cook time: 5 minutes.*

### **Ingredients:**

- 2-3 boneless & skinless chicken breasts/thighs.
- 2 tablespoons roasted peanuts.
- 6-8 dried red chillies, seeded and cut into halves, but cut down on chilli, if you don't want dish to be too spicy.
- 2 tablespoons oil.
- 4 slices peeled fresh ginger.
- 2 cloves garlic sliced diagonally.
- 2 stalks spring onions, cut into rings.



**Marinade:**

- 1 tablespoon cornflour.
- 2 teaspoons light soy sauce.
- 1 tablespoon Chinese Shaoxing rice wine/cooking sherry.
- 1 teaspoon cooking oil.

**Sauce:**

- 1 tablespoon soy sauce.
- 1 teaspoon dark soy sauce.
- 1 teaspoon sugar.
- 1 teaspoon red wine vinegar.
- 2 tablespoons water.
- 1 teaspoon cornflour.

**Method:**

1. Cut the chicken meat into small cubes, rinse in water, pat dry with paper towels and marinate with the ingredients above for 30 minutes.
2. Mix the sauce ingredients in a small bowl and set aside.
3. Heat up a wok/frying pan with one tablespoon of oil and stir-fry the marinated chicken until they are 70% cook. Dish out and set aside. Clean the wok and add in the remaining 2 tablespoons of oil until it's fully heated. Add in the ginger and garlic slices and do a quick stir before adding in the dried red chilies.
4. Stir fry the dried red chilies until aromatic and smell spicy, then add in the chicken meat. Do a few quick stirs before adding in the roasted peanuts. Add the sauce and stir continuously until the chicken meat is nicely coated with the sauce. Add in the scallions, stir to combine well with the chicken, dish out and serve immediately with steamed rice.

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# Two Sides of the Same Coin

## by Karen Taylor



A poem I wrote last week on the bold writers course.

### Heads

Look What you have achieved over the last year.  
You're so dynamic.  
Where is your energy coming from its boundless?  
You are so creative.  
Singing, dancing, acting, painting, making.  
You're so Caring.  
Never endlessly there for people.  
You cook, you clean, garden, work, organise, campaign.  
That's you too.  
You mother, you listen, you enable others to do.  
But what about You?  
Who looks after you?



### Tails

Waiting.  
What am I waiting for?  
Stuck ness that is me.  
Love where is it?  
I'm like a gerbil running around in a plastic ball going nowhere.  
Resentment is that me?  
Anger constantly bubbling under the surface.  
Sadness at what could have been.  
Hurt deep inside.  
Where's forgiveness?  
You made this bed, now you must sleep in it!  
Loneliness.  
Lonely even surrounded by good meaning people.  
I scream silently inside.

No one sees me.

Karen Taylor, 5th December 2023

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# My Form of Brain Disease

## by Ron Coleman

I've been taking part in a bold writers' workshop, and decided to write something about my form of brain disease.

I'm three score years and 10, but I've been ill and somehow feel liquid.  
My life is all tea and phlegm and piss and shit.  
I'm longing to get back on solid ground to get back to solid food  
When you're in the middle of fever dreams it's so hard to remember feeling well,  
But slowly I've climbed the north face of the Eiger in my bedroom  
Crampons on my slippers,  
Howling wind and blizzards in my centrally heated flat  
Slowly returning to what is laughably termed normality.

Someone suggests writing about adventure,  
and my mind turns to 1960s science fiction a  
film called fantastic voyage, in which a  
submarine is miniaturised and injected into a  
persons body to carry out a crucial operation.

Recently I've been trying to explain the  
problems of the workings of my brain.

My disease does have a name, but if I tell it to  
you, you'll jump to so many easy conclusions  
and so I reach for metaphors.



Sometimes I talk about a small rodent  
nibbling away the neurons, but that seems  
just too cuddly altogether, too friendly, my  
little brain hamster Whizzing away on its wheel in a cage altogether too whimsical,  
then I thought about describing corrosion.

The idea that my brain is somehow rusting grey turning to brown before becoming  
brittle and breaking away.

Where would all those rusty pieces go? Making their way down through the  
sinuses to rattle around in the bottom of my skull, this is somehow too  
picturesque toophotogenic, glowing, golden brown.



It's close but no cigar so what analogy works for us both.

How do I convey to you the absolute strangeness of the idea that I have a hole in my head?

I have pretty pictures from brain scans showing not what is, but now what isn't. The CT scan to be frank is a little dull so technical that the radiographers themselves couldn't agree. Exactly what was going on

The SPECT scan is so much more exciting with its pretty colours and radioactivity.

It's just that where everything should be yellow there are now blobs of blue, showing no blood flowing through what I learn are my parietal lobes. Next comes an MRI scan in all its gruesome, three-dimensional detail and a spinal tap.

Suddenly, my life is back to being liquid again a teaspoon full of cerebral spinal fluid, the precious stuff that bathes brain and back, but under a microscope shows the scientists those tell-tale proteins from which there is no escape.

I need another illustration in my children's picture book of the brain. Autumn is, I guess a possibility.

I'm in the autumn of my life. Leaves of started falling from my personal branches, but that way winter comes too soon and I need to keep the permanent cold bay now gathered in this baroque hotel. With its fake suits of armour and tartan tattiness.

It's suggested we write a letter to our future selves with all one needs to know about my disease.

This autumnal red rust rodent this munching beast, this plague of plaques and torrent of tangles. Well how can you know it's not your brain. You don't see through my eyes and if you did you discover that I see things which aren't really there the strange effect of having wires being nibbled through.



You don't have my confusion about lists and numbers, and the names of people newly met.

You don't know how strange it is not to work a suitcase because I can't see the dark coloured zip.

And I find it so hard to explain,

And you'll find it hard to understand.

You'll never find these symptoms listed

On brain disease for Bozos.

And there is this last thing.

You don't know and I don't know what the future holds.

When I first met her Fiona was a live wire,

Laughing and joking and drinking and swimming,

And in a year I was at her funeral with the others.

We exchanged glances, all wondering who would be next,

Which chess piece in this strange game would be taken.

The player is the shadow in the corner.

He has drawn closer, but how close no one knows.

Sometimes I can see him smile,

Sometimes I chase him away,

But he keeps the scythe sharpened.

I tell my friends I want a choir singing Mozarts Requiem,

And a flaming longboat setting out into the North Sea I want songs by Leonard

Cohen and fireworks,

And a decent send off.

I want to be remembered with a smile,

But I fear what may befall me before then.

I picture the dread of the high backed vinyl chairs,

The care home that doesn't and isn't.

So bear with me, while I try and work out what to do next,

And excuse me if I keep looking to the corner,

And talking to the man who isn't really there.

Ron Coleman, 8th December 2023

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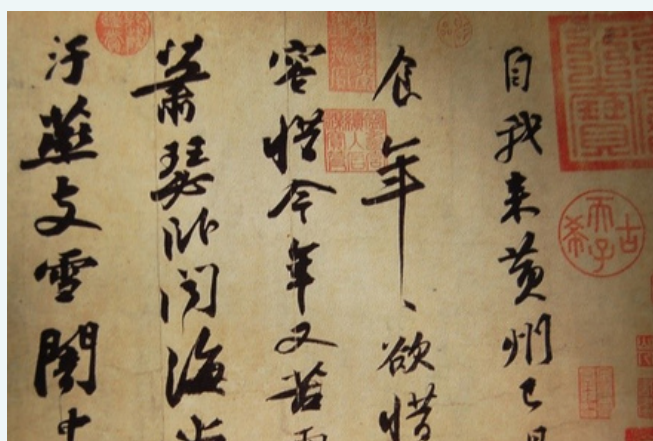
# Can Chinese Calligraphy Promote Mindfulness and Mental Wellbeing? Part 1

## by Michael Cheung

Chinese calligraphy - the stylised artistic writing of Chinese characters is the written form of Chinese that unites the languages (dialects) spoken in China. The Chinese consider calligraphy is supreme among the visual arts in China, it also sets the standard by which Chinese painting is judged.

Calligraphy is the world's oldest abstract art - the art of the line. This basic visual element can also hold a symbolic charge. Nowhere has the symbolic power of the line manifested itself more fully than in Chinese calligraphy, a tradition that spans over 3,000 years. The aesthetics of calligraphy are

important to the history of art in East Asia, where during much of its premodern era classical Chinese was the lingua franca (or common language).



It is not important to read and write Chinese characters to appreciating the unique charm of Chinese calligraphy. The characters are fundamentally ideographic (a symbol that represents an idea or a thing, rather than the sounds of a word in nature), meaning they can symbolise the idea of a thing rather than transcribe its pronunciation (more about this in the next newsletter).

A calligrapher wields a pliant brush (capable of creating rhythmically swelling and diminishing lines), it dips its tip (made with animal hair) into ink made from grinding on an ink stone with water and writes on paper or silk that could have different absorbency rates depending on how it has been treated. Brush, ink, ink stone, and paper are collectively referred to as the “Four Treasures of the Study” 文房四寶.

Chinese calligrapher at Lunar New Year event, Trammell & Margaret Crow Collection of Asian Art, Dallas, Texas, 2 February 2013 (photo: Joe Mabel, CC BY-SA 3.0)



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### **What does Chinese calligraphy have to do with cognitive impairment?**

One of the studies from Taipei: - “Effects of Chinese Calligraphy Handwriting (CCH) Training for Individuals with Mild Cognitive Impairment” - found that although Dementia is a common disease in some aging populations. The treatment has mainly focused on memory decline prevention and behaviour control. Nonpharmacological treatments, such as cognition training, physical exercise, and music therapy have been effective in slowing memory decline. Chinese calligraphy handwriting (CCH) through ‘breath regulation’ and ‘fine hand control’ involves high concentration levels, emotion regulation, and self-awareness. CCH is a mind and body activity that is culturally relevant to older Chinese adults.

This study found augmented cognitive, emotional, and upper limb stability in a self-report survey after CCH training in individuals with mild cognitive impairment. This CCH training involved a slowly writing pace and meditative breathing, resulting in higher concentration. Several practice sessions led the participants to adopt a slower pace of life and connected visuospatial and working memory about the form, sound, and meaning of Chinese characters as participants held a brush pen while maintaining upper limb stability. Language function was also improved after the oral presentations that participants gave while showing their work, similar to practices in art therapy. It is important to slow down rapid memory decline, maintain emotional stability, and create good times in patients with mild cognitive impairment through CCH training.

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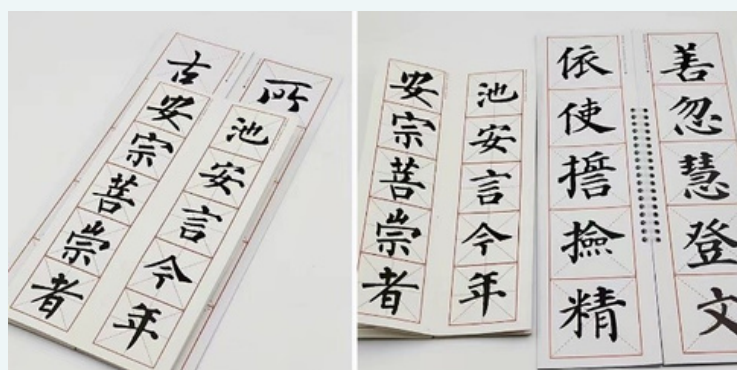
Chinese calligraphy isn't just about mastering brush strokes; it is about cultivating **mindfulness** for yourself and those around you. If you are looking for a way to improve our mental well-being while engaging in creative expression, you should try Chinese calligraphy. It might be what we need to find inner peace and balance.



I hope to find out if this type of mindfulness work can help people with cognitive impairment in Scotland. I intend to adapt and design a course to find out if this type of work can work with someone who hasn't had any training in Chinese calligraphy.



### More images on Chinese Calligraphy







**Part 2, in January 2024 Newsletter.**



## Recipe 2

### Aromatic Peking Duck

You are probably familiar with this popular dish, it is often seen on menus in Chinese restaurants in the UK, perhaps you have even tried it. Based on the more famous Peking Duck (or Beijing Duck), Crispy Aromatic Duck is actually a relatively new dish, having been created in the UK in the 20th century, to cater to local tastes.

#### Ingredients

- 2 pieces of duck (legs or breasts), fresh or frozen.
- 2 slices of fresh root ginger sliced.
- 2 spring onions cut in to 7.5 cm (3 in) length.
- Cornflour, plain flour or potato flour for dusting.
- Vegetable or groundnut oil.



#### For the spice rub

- ½ tablespoon five-spice powder
- 30 g Sichuan peppercorns.
- 2 teaspoons whole black peppercorns.
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds.
- Tablespoon of rock salt or similar.
- ½ tablespoon of yellow bean sauce.

#### To Serve

- Chinese pancakes - or homemade.
- 3 spring onions, finely shredded.
- Slice a quarter cucumber.
- 1 tablespoon of Hoisin sauce/plum sauce.
- 1 teaspoon of castor sugar.



## **Method**

1. If the duck pieces are frozen, thaw it thoroughly - rinse well and blot it completely dry with kitchen paper. Mix all the ingredients for the spice rub together in a small bowl, then rub the duck inside and out with this mixture, applying it evenly. Wrap well in cling film and place in the refrigerator for half an hour (longer if you are doing this at home). After this time, brush any excess spices from the duck. Put the ginger and spring onions on top of the duck pieces and put the duck on a heatproof plate. Steam the duck pieces for 35 minutes (in a steamer if possible).
2. Remove the duck from the steamer and pour off all the liquid. Discard the ginger and spring onions. Leave the duck in a cool place for 15 minutes or until it has dried and cooled.
3. To crisp up the duck, just before you are ready to serve, dust duck with cornflour, or plain flour or cornflour, shaking off the excess. Heat the oil in a wok and shallow fry both sides of the duck pieces to crisp them up.
4. (Healthy options – simply microwave the duck pieces with frying and then carve/slice).

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0VNCquxNfr0>**

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# Dementia and the Holidays

## by Teepa Snow

As we prepare for the closing of another year and as the holidays are approaching, it's a good time to do a check-in! When dementia is in the family, it is important to take a step back and evaluate prior to embarking on old holiday traditional activities, planning additional special events, or gathering large groups of people together for interactions. If any one of us is already maxed out, then adding one more drop in the bucket could



tip the scales into distress! That does not mean that you cannot celebrate the holidays, but it does mean we will want to change or modify something.

What are the key items to check on when measuring your holiday readiness? Pause and really consider what you have noticed about the last few months or weeks.

1. How is time being spent? How balanced is the 24 hours? How much and when is sleep happening? How much time is spent on taking care of body, brain, and home?
2. How about physical wellness, health, illnesses?
3. What pain is present—physical, emotional, or spiritual? Is it being well-managed or addressed?
4. What physical, emotional, or spiritual reserves are available? What more can be offered?
5. Where are other system supports? What else is available and not being used, no longer available, or beginning to wear out or give out?

Now that you have taken inventory, does it seem that things are doing well and ready for some holiday festivities, in a big way?



Or is someone in a different place and needing a change of pace this time around? Is it time for a break from the routine and would little pieces of holiday spirit and pleasures be just the ticket? Or is there one or more of those involved who really needs something very different or smaller this year? Is it possible that breaking the season into small moments and very short, single sensory experiences would be a better idea for all concerned? Or is it possible that different members of the team will each need something different out of the holiday season to find purpose and joy this time around?

It could be, that like Santa or Kris Kringle making a list and checking it twice, there is as much fun and purpose to be had in having short sing-a-longs on Zoom as getting everyone together to have a holiday party. Preparing for the holiday feast by looking through the family cookbook, the pantry, and the fridge may be all that is really needed to celebrate the meal. Then, stopping in and eating with a good friend or faith community family for the meal could take the place of completing the rest of the traditional meal preparation.



Perhaps there will be new moments of pleasure and joy without the work and waiting involved in a full-out gathering at your place or a long-distance trip to others. Could there be as much pleasure and less stress with turning on a small crockpot of apple juice and cinnamon sticks as there is with a full-out trip to the local farm? Or would the car ride to the farm with the leaves turning or the holiday lights shining be the best match up?

The bottom line for changing abilities and special times is the importance of checking in and assessing, rather than assuming this year will be like the last. Make sure this season has moments of joy built in, and savor each one. Perhaps it's time to change—to stop keeping up traditions that simply fill us with a sense of longing or loss, or overwhelm our partners or supports. Instead, let's find or create new options or opportunities that satisfy or fulfill a sense of purpose and value, by doing less and liking more. There is a big difference between letting go of what is not working and enjoying what is possible, rather than enduring or giving up and simply grieving that loss.

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# **Nurturing the Holiday Spirit: Christmas and Dementia**

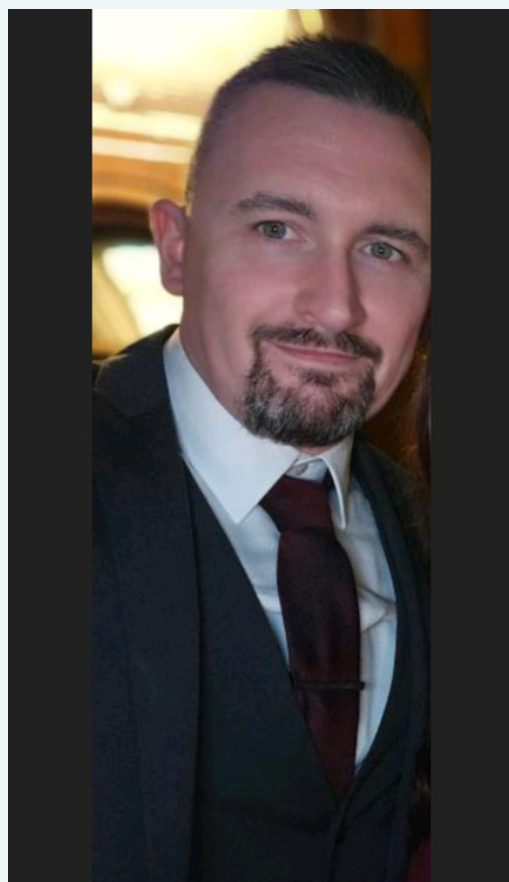
## **by Craig Colligan**

### **Introduction**

Christmas is a time of joy, love, and togetherness, filled with cherished traditions and treasured memories. However, for families affected by dementia, the holiday season can present unique challenges. As we strive to make this time special for everyone, it is important to understand how dementia can impact individuals and find ways to adapt our celebrations accordingly.

### **1. Understanding Dementia**

Dementia is a progressive condition that affects cognitive abilities, including memory, communication, and reasoning. It can cause confusion, disorientation, and difficulty in adapting to new situations. As a result, the excitement and sensory overload often associated with Christmas can be overwhelming for individuals with dementia.



### **2. Creating a Calm and Familiar Environment**

To ensure a peaceful and comfortable Christmas experience, it is essential to create a familiar and sensory-friendly environment. Simple decorations, soft lighting, and calming music can help reduce anxiety. Maintaining routines and avoiding sudden changes in the environment will contribute to a sense of security.





### **3. Tailoring Celebrations to Individual Needs**

Tailoring Christmas celebrations to the individual needs of those with dementia is crucial. Smaller gatherings with immediate family members or close friends can help minimize confusion and promote a more relaxed atmosphere. By reducing noise levels and organizing activities that engage the senses, such as baking, singing carols, or reminiscing, we can create meaningful moments that evoke positive emotions.

### **4. Engaging in Familiar Traditions**

Engaging in familiar traditions can be a source of comfort and connection for individuals with dementia. Adapt these traditions to accommodate their abilities. For instance, instead of intricate gift-wrapping, opt for simple and easily opened presents. Involve them in decorating the tree, as the act of hanging ornaments and recalling associated memories can bring joy and a sense of purpose.

### **5. Supporting Caregivers and Family Members**

Christmas can put additional strain on caregivers and family members, as they strive to create a meaningful experience for their loved ones with dementia. Providing emotional support, respite care, and practical help can alleviate the burden. Encouraging open communication and offering a listening ear can make a significant difference during this time.

### **6. Mindful Communication**

Communication plays a vital role in ensuring a pleasant experience for individuals with dementia at Christmas. Speak slowly and clearly, using simple language and visual cues. Give them time to respond and avoid correcting or challenging their memories. Embrace their reality and focus on validating their emotions and experiences.



## 7. Emphasizing Presence over Presents

Amidst the hustle and bustle of Christmas shopping, it is important to remember that the greatest gift for someone with dementia is our presence. Rather than focusing solely on material gifts, spend quality time together engaging in activities that promote connection and meaningful moments.

## Conclusion

Christmas holds a special place in our hearts, and by understanding the challenges faced by individuals with dementia, we can make the holiday season more enjoyable for them. Tailoring celebrations to their needs, creating a calm environment, engaging in familiar traditions, and providing support to caregivers can all contribute to a meaningful and dementia-friendly Christmas. As we nurture the holiday spirit, let us embrace compassion and empathy, fostering joy and togetherness for all, regardless of cognitive abilities.

Dementia Lead Nurse at Keane Premier Healthcare  
and works for Clinical Service Manager at Advinia  
Health Care and Bank Registered Nurse at NHS  
Greater Glasgow and Clyde  
Studied MSc Dementia Studies at University of  
Stirling

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# Neuroscience Annual Public Christmas Lecture by Michael Cheung

My friend and I attended the Edinburgh Neuroscience Annual Public Christmas Lecture: “Changing the Conversation and Transforming Lives of People with Motor Neuron Disease” at the Anatomy Lecture Theatre, Teviot Place, Edinburgh on Thursday 14th December 2023.

This year, they had two distinguished speakers who have been at the forefront of driving Motor Neuron Disease (MND) research in Scotland.



**Suvankar Pal** (*Professor of Neurodegenerative Disorders and Clinical Trials Honorary Consultant Neurologist Centre for Clinical Brain Sciences, University of Edinburgh*) and **Judy Newton** (*Anne Rowling Clinic Deputy Director, Clinic & Nurse Manager*) talked to the audience from the early days when there was little research and even less hope for effective treatments, through the establishing of the world's first nationwide MND registry, widening the MND nurse network and major investments in discovery research, to the ongoing, ground-breaking MND SMART, the largest ever clinical trial for MND in the UK, and plans for further innovation in care and research.



They mentioned why it is important to merge research and clinical teams in any medical work for any medical work to be successful and the difficulties of drug trials, the length of time taken to produce a viable cure for disease like MND – and other diseases. Somehow the MND team have managed to cut down on the time taken to produce a viable drug for MND.

The work they do with MND have set an excellent way for research and dealing with other diseases like dementia.

Some references about their work:

1.MND SMART – [MND-SMART | Clinical trials for MND.](#)

2.Motor neuron disease (MND) clinic

[Motor neuron disease \(MND\) clinic | Anne Rowling Regenerative Neurology Clinic \(annerowlingclinic.org\)](#)

3.Research & trials

[Research & trials | Anne Rowling Regenerative Neurology Clinic \(annerowlingclinic.org\)](#)

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# Scottish Dementia Friendly Communities (DFC) Network: Update December 2023 by Colm McBriarty



I wanted to write to provide an update on our recent in-person event in Kilmarnock, to distribute some information on behalf of new Network members, and to offer a glimpse into some of our plans for 2024. Here goes.....

## **1. In-person event in CentreStage Communities, 29 November 2023**

Over 30 people attended our recent event in CentreStage Communities in Kilmarnock, so a huge thank you to everyone who gave up their time to be there.

When I last visited the building, it was an empty shell of a closed school, but it is now an absolutely amazing community venue which hosts a café, performances, community events and the famous weekly 'Gie It Laldy' session. The staff team were wonderful, the food was plentiful, and our rooms were cosy and warm on a very cold day.

I have summarised the discussions as briefly as I can and included it in a link below, for you to read. This has been shared with the Scottish Government's Dementia Policy Unit, and we're very glad that a member of their team was able to be there on the day.

[https://www.dotgo.uk/shared/images/content/bus\\_54552/pdf/Feedback\\_from\\_SDFCN\\_Kilmarnock\\_event\\_-\\_Network.pdf](https://www.dotgo.uk/shared/images/content/bus_54552/pdf/Feedback_from_SDFCN_Kilmarnock_event_-_Network.pdf)

## **2. Local discussions in 2024**

I was talking with artist, activist, and all-round renaissance man Willy Gilder recently. He suggested that local groups in Edinburgh should get together and talk about issues that affected them, see how they might work together to produce solutions, and asked if About Dementia could help in some way.





I stole that idea for the Kilmarnock event, and I am working on a plan to facilitate and support local discussions all over the country in 2024. The general idea is for the DFC Network to support a host venue which would host discussions for a day or half-day, then we can collect the feedback and share it with the Scottish Government. We can help with venue costs, refreshments and travel expenses, and the discussions would support and empower local voices at a time when the national dementia strategy is taking off. Feel free to let me know what you think, and if you have any ideas or suggestions ([colm.mcbriarty@agescotland.org.uk](mailto:colm.mcbriarty@agescotland.org.uk)).

Thank you for the inspiration, Willy!

### **3. Capacity building opportunities from our Dementia Training team**

My colleagues Rachel and Julie continue to provide a huge range of training and capacity building sessions on screen and in venues all over the country. Please have a read through their flyer (*see link below*) and contact them if you want to attend any sessions, or if you have any ideas or requests.

[https://www.dotgo.uk/shared/images/content/bus\\_54552/pdf/Capacity\\_building\\_opportunities\\_for\\_DFCs\\_Flyer.pdf](https://www.dotgo.uk/shared/images/content/bus_54552/pdf/Capacity_building_opportunities_for_DFCs_Flyer.pdf)

### **4. Dementia Activists**

Many of you will already have received the email from Kainde Manji, our Head of Dementia, about our highly-valued dementia activists. However, *see link below*, in case you may have missed it, and we would encourage you to have a think if you or someone you know would like to get involved.

[https://www.dotgo.uk/shared/images/content/bus\\_54552/pdf/EMAIL\\_-\\_About\\_Dementia.pdf](https://www.dotgo.uk/shared/images/content/bus_54552/pdf/EMAIL_-_About_Dementia.pdf)

## 5. Massage For Dementia

Nicolle Mitchell (pictured right) is a Holistic Practitioner and Trainer, and the owner of Massage For Dementia <https://massagefordementia.co.uk>

She is one of the latest members of the Network and is based in Cornwall, but she is currently looking for suitable host venues in Scotland in which she can deliver her "Massaging Persons Living With Dementia" course. Please have a read through Nicolle's message (*see link below*), and do contact her if you would like to host one of the training sessions, or if you want to know more about her work.



[https://www.dotgo.uk/shared/images/content/bus\\_54552/pdf/DFC\\_Network\\_networker\\_shout\\_out\\_Dec\\_23.pdf](https://www.dotgo.uk/shared/images/content/bus_54552/pdf/DFC_Network_networker_shout_out_Dec_23.pdf)

## 6. Home Instead Edinburgh

Another new Network member, Home Instead Edinburgh, is reaching out to groups in the wider Edinburgh area to promote their 'Be A Santa To A Senior' initiative. If you are located in or near Edinburgh, or if you want to contribute, please have a look at their message (*see link below*) and drop them a line.

[https://www.dotgo.uk/shared/images/content/bus\\_54552/pdf/Help\\_Home\\_Instead\\_promote\\_Be\\_A\\_Santa\\_To\\_A\\_Senior\\_again\\_this\\_Christmas.pdf](https://www.dotgo.uk/shared/images/content/bus_54552/pdf/Help_Home_Instead_promote_Be_A_Santa_To_A_Senior_again_this_Christmas.pdf)



There won't be an online meeting in December but we will return in January. I have some ideas and issues that we can explore in our meetings but feel free to make your own suggestions and, as always, please let your members with lived experience of dementia – those living with the condition and unpaid carers / caring partners – know that they are welcome to attend the meetings and play a role in the Network too.

Thank you all for your support and encouragement this year, look after yourselves and each other over the holiday season, and I'm looking forward to catching up with you all in 2024.

Bye for now,

Colm.

**Colm McBriarty**

Community Development Officer (Dementia)



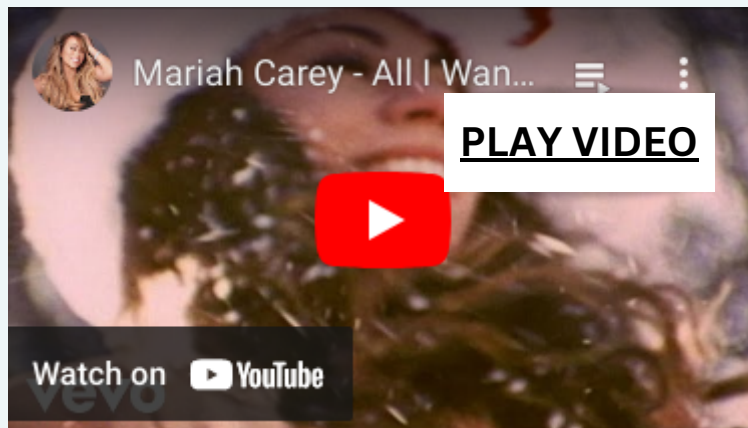
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## Christmas Playlist 2023.

### Most played Christmas Songs in 2023.

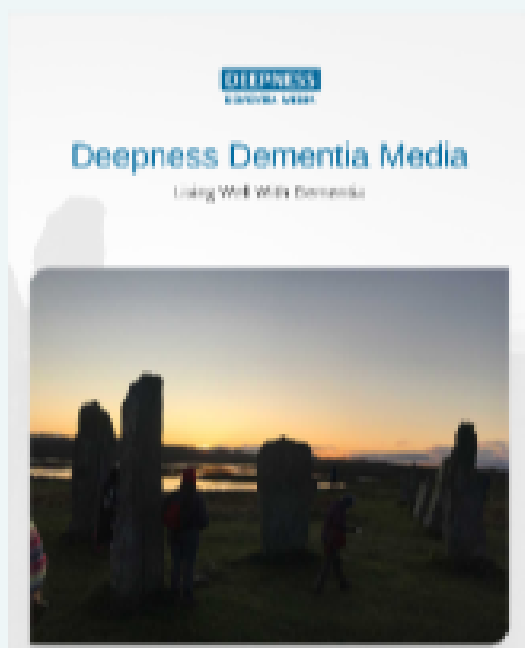


### Santa's Castle (2018). Full Movie



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Dementia Media is a platform that gives people tools for living well with dementia designed collaboratively with those with dementia leading the process. By coming together in a supportive, energetic common space makes up a huge difference to the well-being of those going through dementia. As opposed to providing a cure, our goal is to help people become autonomous and get the most out of life. We bring a series of innovative projects - such as our radio station, online education courses, and much more - that use technology and music in a way that keeps people connected and stimulated.

“I didn’t want to die without leaving something for my family to enjoy and remember my strengths,” he says of the thinking behind the EP. “The whole concept was to create something that was a legacy for the person, and as soon as I thought about wanting to do that for myself I knew it was something other people would want to do, to leave our mark on society. It’s almost like leaving our families a gift.”

**The Demented Poets EP is on sale now via Bandcamp iTunes and other outlets:**

**Bandcamp** - <https://thedementedpoets.bandcamp.com>

**Spotify** - <https://open.spotify.com/album/6pngYVybZ3qUf6XMhOOFuK>

**Deezer** - <https://www.deezer.com/en/album/258048592>

**iTunes / Apple Music** - <https://music.apple.com/us/album/the-demented-poets-ep/1585080810>

**Amazon** - <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09FRVYQ1F>