

Perspective is so important during difficult times

THE first full moon of the year is the brightest of all the full moons. It is sometimes known as the Wolf Moon, a name given by the Algonquin tribe after the wolf packs that would hungrily howl near their villages, amidst the deep midwinter snows.

Here in the north it is a magical experience to walk into the semi darkness after the sun has set and find my way through the luminous, monochromatic palette of sky, earth and sea, only to look up and marvel at the source of this midnight radiance. The whole world is aglow with mystery.

I cannot imagine what it must be like to reverse this experience - to float in space and gaze down on Earth. Remarkably we live in an era where a tiny handful have done just that.

Last week, on Desert Island Discs, interviewer Lauren Laverne spoke to British astronaut Tim Peake.

To manage his extraordinary life, Peake



Northern Drift
By Monique Sliedrecht



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made a ritual of floating up to the observatory windows to perform the mundane task of brushing his teeth whilst looking at the magnificent vision of the earth passing by.

Each time there was something different to see, he said - colours, lighting conditions, weather... but contemplating this rare beauty, he kept on brushing his teeth.

Simple rituals are very important in shaping our lives in all circumstances. "We're so fortunate as astronauts," said Peake. "We stick to a structure and routine on a space station to help us to make sure everybody knows what to do, when to do it and manage expectations to avoid conflict." He expressed a deep sympathy



The full moon is a stirring sight at any time of the year.

for people facing lockdown without this kind of background.

It's true that back on earth we've been plunged into a rather sudden and unexpected isolation over the last year. Our homes have become like miniature planets floating in space, and sometimes going out is like a space walk!

I grew up in Canada and one of the great heroes of that era was the Canadian space commander, Chris Hadfield. Perhaps he is most famous for his incredible performance of David Bowie's 'Space Oddity' whilst floating through the International Space Station. He also spoke very personally

about the impact of his adventures: "I wish everybody could see our earth for what it is. To rise above it and go around it once is not enough because you're overwhelmed. To go around enough times until the patience starts to seep into you... the eternity of it... It's times like that you think about your beliefs."

It's certainly times like these when we learn patience, with ourselves and our circumstances, and stop to consider our home, Earth, as the precious gift that it is.

There is a famous photo of Tim Peake making a heart shape with his white gloved hands for his children through a bus window

prior to the launch of the space ship in Kazakhstan, December 15, 2015. That image holds a lot of weight, especially since he is about to leave his wife and two little boys and embark on the most dangerous journey of his life.

Perhaps from such a place of care we can put our hearts against the windows of our own homes and send light and love out to our families and friends and the world beyond.

The next full moon is on February 27. Also known as the Snow Moon will you look up at it with me?
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SAMARITANS Scotland

INVERNESS SAMARITANS WILL BE THERE FOR ANYONE STRUGGLING OR FEELING LONELY THIS NEW YEAR

- Local Samaritans volunteers issue the reminder as new insights from the charity reveal people are worried about their wellbeing over the festive period
- Volunteers in Inverness will be among around 1,500 volunteers across the UK and Ireland expected to answer calls for help on Christmas Day.

Volunteers in Inverness will be here to listen this Christmas as new research from Samaritans reveals that being separated from family and loved ones over the festive period is one of the biggest concerns facing callers.

Even without a global pandemic to deal with, Samaritans knows that the festive period can be a challenging time for people when the impact of loneliness often hits home.

New research with over 1,400 of the charity's volunteers across the UK and Ireland found around a quarter who took part in the survey (27%), have spoken to people who were feeling concerned about their wellbeing during Christmas and the winter period, over the past three months.

But volunteers at Inverness will be among those providing round-the-clock support throughout

December to make sure there's always someone there to listen for anyone who is feeling alone or struggling this festive season.

Elizabeth from Inverness shared why it's so important to make sure there's someone there to listen throughout the festive season. She said: "We know that Christmas can be difficult for many people, as it's a time when loneliness can really hit home and that feeling might be heightened this year. Regardless of what happens with Covid restrictions, we want people to know that we'll be here to talk and to listen, 24/7, for anyone who needs us this Christmas."

"Every call for help is answered by a trained volunteer and talking to us is free and confidential. Samaritans has never been a more vital lifeline. If you can make a donation to support our work this festive season, you'll be helping to ensure that we can be there to listen not just on Christmas but throughout the year. And if you find yourself struggling this Christmas, please remember you don't have to face things alone. You can talk to us, day or night, on 116 123 or by emailing jo@samaritans.org."

Damien, from Kirkintilloch, knows first-hand how vital having someone be there to listen during a difficult time can be. Having struggled with anxiety and depression

for years, Damien reached out to Samaritans when he couldn't see a way through the challenges he was facing.

He says: "When I saw something online suggesting I call Samaritans I thought 'what do I have to lose?' That phone call helped me to see that these feelings would pass and to find my way through; I really believe it's a big part of why I'm here to enjoy Christmas with my loved ones, even if that looks a little different this year."

"I know that even during normal times, many people can find the festive season difficult and the worries and uncertainty around the coronavirus pandemic may make this Christmas even harder. But it's so important to know that you don't have to face difficult times alone - whether it's reaching out to family or friends or calling Samaritans - there's always someone there to listen."

Last Christmas* volunteers across 19 Samaritans branches in Scotland answered over 18,800 calls for help by phone, email and letter**. Across the UK and Republic of Ireland volunteers collectively answered more than a quarter of a million calls for help during Christmas in 2019, including over 10,000 on Christmas day alone**.

* Christmas period refers to 1 December 2019 to 1 January 2020

** Statistics source: Samaritans, 2020

- Samaritans volunteer insights related to the past three months (August to October) and was carried out in October 2020.
- A total of 1,439 volunteers responded to the survey.
- 395 volunteers (out of 1,439 participants) stated they had talked to callers concerned about Christmas or the winter period over the past 3 months (27% of survey respondents). This is based on coding of open text answers to the question: "What concerns, if any, have callers raised specifically about their wellbeing over Christmas and the winter period?"
- Among these callers, a sense of bleakness, unease and uncertainty about what the changing restrictions will mean for how they will spend Christmas was an overarching theme.
- Four main themes emerged including family, loneliness, impact of the cold weather and short days and financial worries.
- Anyone can contact Samaritans FREE any time from any phone on 116 123, even a mobile without credit. This number won't show up on your phone bill. Or you can email jo@samaritans.org or visit www.samaritans.org.



**SAMARITANS
LET ME SAY IT
MY WAY**

Talk to us any time you like, in your own way and off the record - about whatever's getting to you.

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jo@samaritans.org

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