

Living Better

February 2021



Welcome, everyone,

to our first newsletter of 2021! Although the year could not have got off to a worse start, we must hold on to the sure knowledge that the light at the end of the tunnel is growing stronger by the day, as the vaccine programme rolls out.

To that end, we should all try to focus on that better future ahead of us and start planning how to make the most of the opportunities it will surely bring. The theme of this newsletter therefore is Setting Goals, a topic, which lies at the heart of Self Management.

Hopefully you will enjoy finding out about the goals our LGOWIT members will be pursuing this year - and to give you further inspiration, reading about some impressive goals achieved in times past. No matter how small and insignificant, every goal you set matters to your future wellbeing. What are you going to choose to do?

Calendar of Events

Every Monday

2.00pm - Tai Chi with Kate

Every Wednesday (note change of day)

2.00pm - Mindfulness with Anne

Every Wednesday

7.00pm - Sound Therapy with Anne Marie

Thursday 4th February

11.00am - Coffee and Chat with Roy

Wednesday 10th February

11.00am - Coffee and Chat with Anne

Friday 12th February

2.00pm - Valentine's Quiz with Roy

Tuesday 16th February

2.30pm - Coffee and Chat with Roy

Wednesday 24th February

2.30pm - Coffee and Chat with Kate

(All of the above take place on Microsoft Teams - just ask the host for an invite to anything you fancy!)

What's New?

Introductory Training Sessions

As our face-to-face training courses continue to be off-limits due to the pandemic, we are now organising more training online.

First off some of our volunteers are going to be running hour long introductory sessions on the Self Management in Challenging Times booklet, which you should all have received last year, and equivalent elearning modules. Watch out for dates and times for these sessions to take place on Microsoft Teams.

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Keeping in Touch

Since the start of Lockdown you will have been getting regular weekly contact from your local Community Networker, which many of you have greatly appreciated.

We will continue to keep in touch, but perhaps not quite so often. However, remember we are always here if there's anything you want to ask us or just fancy a little chat.

How to Contact Us?

LGOWIT is a charitable project hosted by the Highland Third Sector Interface - SC 0043521.

Tel: (01349) 807061

Email:

lgowitadmin@highlandtsi.org.uk



Tasty Treats



If ever there was a time for indulging ourselves, surely this is it - so come on, treat yourself to these tasty delights. As Tesco kept telling us - 'there is no naughty list!'

Ruth's Sweets

When she was teaching Ruth in Inverness used to make sweets for the children as Christmas presents. Here she shares a couple of her recipes.



Tablet

50g granulated sugar 50g butter
Cup of milk 1 tin condensed milk
Vanilla essence

Melt butter in the milk in a large pan. Add sugar and dissolve slowly. Add condensed milk and boil rapidly for 15-20 mins. (ready when starting to solidify at side of pan). Add 1 teaspoon of vanilla essence. Take off the heat and beat for 12 mins. Pour into a greased tin (about 1 1/2 swiss roll tin).

Mark off into squares when warm and then recut when cold.

Peppermint Creams

50g butter 2tbsp milk 500g icing sugar (one pkt.)
2tsp peppermint essence

Melt butter with the milk. Add the icing sugar and peppermint essence. Roll into a long sausage of 2cm diameter. Either slice off discs or roll discs into a ball and flatten with two fingers together. Leave the creams on greaseproof paper to dry for about two hours in a cool place. Using two forks dip into melted chocolate (Ruth prefers dark). Do not leave creams too long in warm melted chocolate or they will soften too much.

Anne's Florentines

100g butter 100g caster sugar
75g chopped glace cherries 75g flaked almonds
50g whole chopped candied peel 50g chopped hazelnuts
2tbsp plain flour 150g plain dark chocolate cut into pieces

Put the butter and sugar in a pan and heat gently until butter has melted and sugar dissolved. Remove the pan from heat and stir in all other ingredients except the chocolate.

Spoon tablespoons of mixture (well spaced) onto 3 lined baking sheets and flatten the mounds slightly. Cook in oven at 180 C (gas mark 4) for 5-7 mins until golden.

Allow to cool and melt chocolate in a bowl over a simmering pan of water. Turn the biscuits upside down and coat with chocolate. Allow to dry and harden.



Kate's Chocolate and Whisky Cake

(approx. 15 portions)

2 eggs
2 dessertspoons of caster sugar
2 tablespoons of scotch whisky
8 oz (250g) unsalted butter (melted)
8 oz (250g) plain choc (melted)
8 oz (250g) digestive biscuits broken into small pieces
2 oz (50g) roughly chopped nuts.

Beat the eggs and sugar well until really thick and creamy.

Gradually add the melted butter beating all the time.

Fold in the whisky, biscuits and nuts.

Spread into the well oiled 7" cake tin with a removable base and chill.

Remove from the tin and serve at room temperature.

Serve on its own or with whipped cream and ice cream.

Smoked Mackerel and Crowdie Pate

(serves 4)

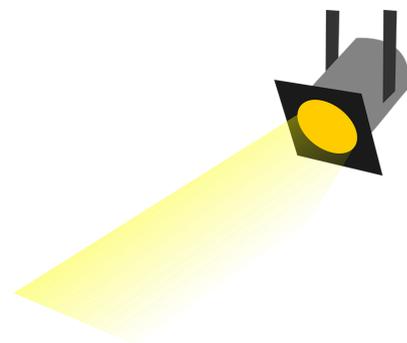
2 Smoked peppered mackerel fillets
Half tub of crowdie cheese
1 heaped teaspoon horseradish sauce
Juice of half lemon

Skin the mackerel fillets
Mash all ingredients together (food processor is okay but don't liquify too much)
Serve with oatcakes and salad or hot buttered toast

LGOWIT Volunteer, Jo

How did you first get involved with LGOWIT?

I initially heard about LGOWIT through work. There was a 5 week session for people with long term health conditions but it was over subscribed so I got in touch to say that I was interested in future courses and from there I ended up being a volunteer .



What has been the highlight thus far of volunteering with LGOWIT?

Without doubt, it's that I get to meet a really friendly, supportive and inspiring group of people. Not only the other volunteers and those that work at LGOWIT but the people that attend the courses. I've learnt so much from everyone.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I love to pamper myself. I like having relaxing baths with bubbles or oils and I put the radio on and listen to some relaxing music I'm worth it!

What goals have you set yourself for this year?

I've piled on the pounds since the beginning of lockdown so I've been on a diet since August. It's going well apart from a few days (weeks!) excess over Christmas. I've lost one and a half stone. I'd like to lose another stone at least.

What has been the worst aspect of coping with life during the pandemic?

The worse aspect is not being able to see family, friends and colleagues. However I'm now really good at Zoom and TEAMS meetings and I'm always nattering on the phone to keep in touch with everyone. It's not the same but it'll do for now. I also have had to cut down going to the Oxygen Works at the MS Centre. I miss my pals there and I miss having oxygen to help with my MS symptoms – I'm very lucky that my symptoms are mild and I'm sure the situation will be back to normal soon.

What is your favourite holiday destination, and why?

I love walking on beaches especially on windy days so it's either the west coast, in particular Clashnessie beach or Sanna bay, or the Northumberland coast.

Tell us your Top Tip for self managing your Long Term Condition?

What works for me is to balance my life with other things such as work, friends, family and 'me time'. It's easy for my health issues to overwhelm me but knowing that I have planned to do or see something or someone certainly helps. I allow my ill health to walk by my side rather than allowing it to sit on my shoulders.

Roy's Quiz - Second Best

Everyone remembers who or what came first - but can you remember who or what came second?

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| 1. Second person to walk on the moon | 7. Second wife of Henry VIII |
| 2. Second person to climb Mount Everest | 8. Second longest river in UK |
| 3. Second James Bond film to star Roger Moore | 9. Second fastest land mammal |
| 4. Second no.1 UK single for The Beatles | 10. Second wedding anniversary |
| 5. Second most mentioned man in the Bible | 11. Second longest UK motorway |
| 6. Second largest country in the world (by pop.) | 12. Second man to reach S. Pole |

Meditate More

My goal for this year is to meditate every day. I've done it before but let it lapse last year. I use the Insight Timer app and have started by joining the group that has a different meditation for each day in January. Just completed day 25.
Catherine in Kyle

Setting Goals

Setting Goals

Bag More Munros



Last year I walked 16 Munros for Munros for Mental Health. On 12th September I climbed the biggest Munro Ben Nevis. It was -11°C at the top with wind chill, snow, sleet and pouring rain throughout the duration of the climb.

I am delighted with my achievements. I pace myself when I plan to climb one and have rest days after. This is the best I have felt since meningitis in 2014, neck surgery in 2015 and my diagnosis of fibromyalgia in 2016. I have struggled but since CBT and medication, I have come to terms with my condition. Although I am not the person I once was, I am still achieving and living in spite of flare-ups and episodes of fatigue, nausea and pain.

I am going to continue as and when I can - my aim is to complete them all before I am 50 years old. I have seven years to try and do this. **Norma in Nairn**

Goal setting is our theme this month, so here's a few examples of what our LGOWIT members and staff are aiming for this year.

Lose Weight and Get Fit

The best thing once this is over will be being able to hug my daughter, fly down south to see my sons and grandsons. Next to that will be getting back to groups and seeing people face to face. My goal for this year is to shift this weight I have gained in lockdown and since stopping smoking. I also want to get fit so I can walk and enjoy parts of Scotland I can't walk to at the moment.

Volunteer Lynn in Lybster

Put Myself First

My goals for this year are:

1. To put myself first rather than work
2. To be successful on the MS Warrior Programme
3. To not let this current lockdown affect my mobility like the first lockdown did.

My fiancé Colin and I hope to get married in August 2021. We were supposed to be married in July 2020 until Covid intervened. We are 10 years happily together at the end of January, five of those happily engaged. I would love for all my friends and family to get through this to help us celebrate.

Volunteer Jan in Invergordon

Finish What I've Started

My goal is to finish all the bits of knitting (and these are not all!) before I buy any more wool for another project.

Val in Nairn



Embrace Support

My main goal for this year is to stop withdrawing from the world and try to embrace the support and activities offered by LGOWIT. I'm sure many members have felt as I do, and I feel like I'm missing out on a gold mine. I need to be more brave this year and try to start living again.

Kenzie in Balloch

Setting Goals

Eat More Healthily

My main goal is to get back into healthy eating. I've been struggling this last year due to my worsening health making cooking difficult as well as my confidence taking a hit after weight gain caused by new meds. However, I know having a healthy diet will make me feel better, make my conditions easier to manage, improve my mood and reduce my weight. So now that the crisps and chocolates from Christmas have finally been destroyed, I'm all set to start taking steps to reach this goal!

The other is to increase my time outdoors/walking my dog. Chridhe, my dog, and I are lucky in that my Dad likes to come and collect her for walks which is a huge help. However, for my own health, I'd like to increase how often we go out together. Even if it's just a wee walk along the road and back. Whilst daunting, it's an achievable goal as long as I take it slowly, a few steps at a time (pun intended!).

Volunteer Kirsty in Culbokie

Go a Little Further

After a LGOWIT session three years ago, when I was struggling with walking the dog and missing outdoors, it was suggested I take small steps around the garden leading to longer 10 min strolls out and about. I continued to gradually increase distance along with daily breathing exercises. I can now walk 2 miles including slight inclines in fairly cold weather. Next Ben Wyvis!! Thank you, Roy, and team!

Ruth in Inverness

Paint More Pretty Pictures



Sonia in Smithton's goal for this year is to paint more beautiful pictures.



Improve Women's Health

My goal for 2021 is to improve women's health in the North. It is maybe quite an ambitious goal and will probably take more than a year as it is all in my spare time. I am now a trained Group Leader with Endometriosis UK. The new Caithness & Sutherland Group has started to form. I set up the Facebook page last Thursday and have 26 members already. Working towards our first online meeting now, hopefully early February. In the background I have been speaking to MSPs, NHS Highland and other influential women in the area about forming a Women's Health Forum for the north.

In the future I would like to see NHS Highland apply an Endometriosis policy which would hopefully lead to quicker diagnosis time, women being listened to and believed and faster treatments. Will be working on lots of awareness about Endometriosis in March for awareness month too.

Community Networker Kirsteen in Thrumster

Get Out of the House

I am currently shielding so stuck in the house. I am in a wheelchair so not even getting out for exercise. I take my car for a drive once a fortnight so it doesn't just die in the drive. I am awaiting my first dose of the vaccine which I'll get because the drug I take for my MS means I don't really have an immune system. Then the second dose should hopefully be done by April/May. So getting the vaccine is my only goal really as I want out of the house and looking forward to having lunch or coffee with friends.

Volunteer Louise in Thurso

Charlotte's Favourite Short Walk

Rosemarkie Beach to Chanonry Point



This is a great walk to do at any time of year, but it is always a good idea to check the tide times, as at low tide there is more of the sandy beach exposed to walk on, rather than the pebbly area of at the top of the beach, especially if you fancy a paddle! There is also the option of a grassy path which runs along the edge of the golf course.

There is a car park at Rosemarkie beach, as well as parking spaces along the seafront towards the golf course. Once parked you can access the beach using one of the sets of steps and then walk along the bay towards the point and lighthouse. The view up the Moray Firth is spectacular, with a lovely view of Rosemarkie village on the left and across to Fort George on the right. Continuing around the bay you will come to Chanonry Point, where a pebbly point juts out into the sea adjacent to the lighthouse. The point is popular with dolphin-spotting visitors and is known as one of the best places in the UK to spot these amazing creatures. One of the best times to spot them is around an hour after low tide when the dolphins are chasing the salmon in, you may even see them just feet away from the point jumping from the water.

There is also the option to park at the point itself, with a short walk from the car park, past the lighthouse to the pebbly shore. This area can get very busy in the summer and there is a parking charge here, but it is also a nice spot for a picnic with a number of benches on the grassy area.

In light of COVID-19, everyone's health and safety is the most important thing. Please stay up to date with the latest government restrictions. Plan ahead. If you go somewhere and it looks busy, please go elsewhere. Take care and stay safe, everyone.



*Natural
Craft
Corner*

This is an ideal craft to do at home just now when we can't get out to a craft shop, as all the materials for this twig art jar are things you can find outside or maybe have at home. All you need is a selection of twigs (I would recommend drying them first); an old jar; glue (a glue gun is best if you have one) and twine or ribbon for decoration. The finished article makes a lovely table decoration that you can put flowers or a tealight in. I made something similar using driftwood and a candle jar (in the pic above). The light from the candle cast lovely flickering shadows through the driftwood (health and safety tested).

Natural materials are great for crafts, and twigs can be used to make frames, pictures and sculptures. If you fancy creating something twiggy, please share your creations with us, we'd love to see them.

Happy crafting!

Health Walk Coordinator, Charlotte

Colouring Picture

Valentine's Day is approaching - enjoy colouring in this floral loveheart and send it to your 'sweetheart' on the 14th!



Highland Fuel Support and Inverness Winter Payment

There are two separate schemes for additional winter fuel support.

The Highland Fuel Support Fund is for households in Highland who are struggling to pay their fuel bills during the COVID-19 pandemic. The amount is £60 and those eligible are encouraged to apply as soon as possible as the fund is limited and closes on 28th February. To qualify you must be spending more than 10% of your income after paying your rent/mortgage on home heating and you be entitled to a council tax reduction (CTR). Even if you do not get the CTR you may still be able to get help if you have less than £16000 capital and cannot receive other public funds. Full details and an online application can be found at <https://www.highland.gov.uk/fuelsupportfund> or contact the Welfare Support Team Welfare.support@highland.gov.uk / 0800 090 1004 if you are not online. One LGOWIT member reports it is very quick and easy to apply for.

The Inverness Winter Payment Scheme is funded from the Inverness Common Good so only applies to specific Inverness postcodes. The amount is £86. Closing date is 28th February. If you have a printer you can download the application form at www.highland.gov/invernesswinterpayments or call either 01349 886661 during normal office hours or using the Welfare Support Team number above to ask for one to be sent out to you.

Mary sends emails to all members with information like this from time to time. The subject will always have LGOWIT Update or Newsflash included. If you find this sort of information useful, watch out for messages from lgowitadmin@highlandtsi.org.uk.

My Story



Living with a chronic health condition on a day to day basis can be frustrating, worrying and at times overwhelming. Adding in working full time and managing home life can be a challenging balancing act and take its toll on both physical and mental health. With the right support however and a whole lot of stubbornness added into the mix has ensured I have maintained a quality of life that might look a bit different from the one I had before but not any less valuable.

I became very ill with sepsis in 2018 and although the sepsis was resolved I have been left with a chronic embedded infection which continues to cause a great deal of physical pain and discomfort as well as feeling like I have flu a lot of the time. However, gradually my condition has become well managed now I have the right treatment pathway and instead of having bad months and weeks now have the odd bad few days.

Initially after discharge from hospital in 2018 I continued to have severe symptoms and was bedridden due to pain and aching all over, unable to sleep or eat. My G.P was at a loss as to what was going on with me and after prescribing many rounds of antibiotics which would only improve symptoms for a few days he suggested medications were having a 'placebo' effect. At this point I could not see a way forward and just felt so desperate with a huge toll being taken on my mental health with me feeling like a burden to my family and employer.

I realised quite quickly that to recover I was going to have to be pro-active in seeking out a treatment pathway and although not really able to get out of bed was able to use my laptop to research other people's experience of my symptoms. The real turning point for me was finding a charity that supported people with my symptoms and were able to guide me to the appropriate medical specialists. Although the specialist I chose was based in England I made the long trip to see him with my husband. This visit was instrumental in me getting the support, knowledge and treatment to get me well.

To have a formal diagnosis for me was incredibly helpful as I could then get on the correct treatment but also it felt validating that I wasn't exaggerating or imagining my symptoms. My GP although apologetic for their initial response was unsupportive of my treatment choice and so it was also important to lay aside any resentments and frustrations I had with the level of care I had received locally as sometimes you have to choose between being 'right' or 'happy'. There are times I still experience some frustrations but now realise the importance of not hanging on to these feelings and instead 'doing something' about helping myself get better.

- * Having supportive family and friends who understand that my condition means I can't do as much as I used to or might have to change or cancel plans at the last minute.
- * Being pro-active in seeking out a treatment pathway that I feel confident in and being clear and realistic and measured about my needs and expectations.
- * Being Kind To Myself - realising I am only one person and there are only so many hours in the day. Using the 'Spoons Theory' is a quick and really helpful way for me to prioritise tasks for the day.
- * Understanding the early warning signs of a flare up of symptoms and positive self talk – having a bad day or few days doesn't mean I am 'back to square one'.
- * Having flexibility within my work – my employer has been tremendously supportive and taken the time to understand my condition and offer me the flexibility to set my diary and attend medical appointments whenever necessary.

I still have some way to go before I am fully recovered but I now feel in control of my condition and well supported to move forward.

Lynn from MIND Scotland