



FÜRSTENBERG
INSTITUT

NEWS

December | 2020



Enjoying Christmas in
new splendour

Consciously enjoy change

Corona-Winter
This is how you
strengthen yourself



Dear reader,



A highly unusual year is coming to a close – and many of us are much the wiser. We have had no other choice than to adapt to the new external circumstances. However, it is up to us alone how we choose to deal with them. If we complain about things, for example, we do ourselves no favours. We could, however, quite simply decide to allow ourselves to have a good time within the changed parameters. For my part, I certainly intend to have a really enjoyable winter. I have such happy memories of my childhood days: a sense of calm was restored, we sat for hours at the dinner table in the evenings, talking, playing, making things, and eating baked apples with a hot rum pot and ice cream. Finally some time to sleep a bit longer and decorate the rooms in the festive spirit. We can then start the new year with more energy and élan. This is what nature has always intended for us.

In this newsletter, we offer some ideas on how you can organise the Christmas season in corona conditions, what a healthy consumption of alcohol looks like, and how to spot if a colleague or someone you know is faring well or badly in these times.

I sincerely wish you a wonderful Christmas season and hope that you start the New Year in great health and happiness!

Best wishes,

Reinhold Fürstenberg

How to survive the corona times!



With a corona winter fast approaching, how can we take good care of ourselves and our loved ones, and continue enjoying life? Reinhold Fürstenberg has some valuable tips for you.

Many people feel downcast right now. Does that also have anything to do with corona? What exactly is the pandemic doing to our mental state?

Above all, the corona time is a period of uncertainty and change. People respond to this in many different ways. Some have found more free time and a slower way of living, and also discover new facets of life. Others have financial worries, feel isolated or are overburdened by not having enough space in crowded apartments. The pandemic

is reinforcing what was already there beforehand – both in positive and negative terms. Emotions are coming to light more intensely than before. The future is more uncertain than ever and that can trigger dependency and fear.



Can we overcome this crisis?

Even if things don't go so well from time to time, we are all fully equipped with the mental capacities for overcoming a crisis. Many people emerge even stronger because the crisis enables them to train their emotional muscles. Basically, we have no other choice than to keep on overcoming difficult situations in life and to develop new ideas and solutions. And when we sometimes run out of ideas: life will go on and new paths will one day open up.

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What can I actually do for myself?

It is important to recharge your batteries on a regular basis. For example, you could take some of the time we now have on our hands to do things that are fun and that you enjoy doing with others. Rediscover some of your old hobbies – now is the chance to start playing card games again or meeting up with friends or family to enjoy your favorite meals. This can also be done virtually if everyone cooks the same thing and manages to sit down to eat at the same time. Always keep sight of the best things in life and, in conversation with others, try to talk about what is “good” as much as possible. That will improve your overall mood and also have a positive influence on others. In turn, this will be good for your own mental health too.

In addition, make an effort to do some physical activity. Find something that suits you – going for a walk regularly, bouncing on a trampoline or hula-hoop training to good music all have an instant impact.

If you don't go to work, work from home or are on a furlough scheme, it helps to structure your day well and stay in contact with others: get up reasonably early in the morning and divide your day as well as possible into working times and chores such as shopping or tidying up. Time for your relationship and family, as well as for breaks and dinners also needs to be planned and, if possible, time to spend alone. While doing all this, it is important to go easy on yourself because if your plans don't work out you need to afford yourself a degree of leniency.

How can I help myself and others if I don't feel well myself?

If you notice that you haven't been feeling well for a while, you really should seek out some help. Perhaps you could first talk to someone close to you in your family or circle of friends. The basic principle is: good conversations create more distance to the problem and help you to develop new ideas for solutions. What's more, other people often provide a source of inspiration that we wouldn't have found by ourselves because we cannot see the wood for the trees. Take good care not to use the conversations just to complain about the situation because you will probably find that the other person quickly loses interest and it won't be of much real benefit to you either. You can always get in touch with an external counsellor, such as with us at the Fürstenberg Institut, who has experience in working together to improve your situation.

If you notice that someone you know has been unhappy for more than four weeks or has been behaving differently than normal, you really should speak to them about it. When people are suffering from mental strain, they often cannot see what effect they have on others and are not able to escape from their problems by themselves. This is why it is so important to speak to them and offer external support.

It is advisable to tell the person concerned what you have noticed as clearly as possible and not to judge them for their actions. Let them know that they really should do something to make things better for themselves again. Stand by them because many people benefit from taking professional help and from feeling that they are not alone with their problems.

in
german

Videotip

This video offers you more tips on maintaining your mental health <https://simpleshow.com/de-de/mentale-gesundheit/> and so do other videos on the Fürstenberg Institut's YouTube channel www.youtube.com/channel/UCYb5hZswWeTgbUu4VTbmtIA

customer log-in

The customer log-in on the Fürstenberg Institut's website also offers you further information and support services for reducing mental stress.

Webinar

You can also go to the customer log-in to register for free to our webinar entitled

Islands of calm in challenging times

on Tuesday, 08.12.2020 at 11.00 a.m.

in
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A glass in honour ...

Many people have increased their consumption of alcohol during the corona time. Beverage companies, particularly the producers of high-grade alcoholic drinks, are reporting that sales are at an all-time peak. The reasons for this are varied, and range from boredom, to compensating for missing evenings in the pub or restaurant, through to using a drink to mark the end of the working day. What lies behind all this?

In Germany, an estimated 74,000 people die every year of the consequences of their alcohol consumption. The per capita consumption of alcoholic drinks stands at 131 litres. A reported 1.77 million people are reported to be dependent on alcohol, while another 1.61 million are endangered by it. An interesting fact here is that the higher a person's social status is, the more alcohol they consume.

By contrast, almost 3% of adults do not drink any alcohol. We can conclude from this that the majority of people in our society can deal with alcoholic drinks well. In fact, many people have mostly positive experiences with alcohol – even in small amounts it has a stimulating and mood-enhancing effect.

We would have to do quite a few relaxation exercises to match the effect of 2-3 glasses of wine. Alcohol lets us forget our worries for a while or at least makes them seem smaller; it also makes us feel braver or lighter. And in moderate doses, alcohol hardly has any side-effects. All these are good reasons for many people to regularly enjoy an alcoholic drink. Yet we often hear a voice in our heads warning us not to



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drink too much, and to be careful. But what is too much? What level of alcohol consumption is acceptable? Can I be considered addicted to alcohol if I drink a bottle of beer every evening?

The German Centre for Addiction Issues recommends women not to drink more than 12 grams of alcohol a day, which corresponds to approx. 0.3 litres of beer or 0.15 litres of wine or approx. 4cl of spirits (liqueur, whiskey, vodka, etc.), and men not to drink more than 24 grams, which corresponds to approx. 0.6 litres of beer or 0.3 litres of wine or approx. 8cl of spirits, in order to prevent later consequences for health. It is also recommended to completely forgo alcohol for at least two or three days a week to avoid developing a drinking habit. People on medication or who have hereditary issues as well as women who are pregnant or breastfeeding should steer clear of alcohol altogether.

Besides the quantity, other factors should also be taken into account when it comes to a “healthy” consumption of alcohol:

1. Maintain a realistic assessment of your consumption

“How much do you drink?” If you put this question to drinkers, you will rarely get an accurate answer because so many of them are not aware of their real consumption. We don’t count and it is entirely normal in our culture to have a quick glass of wine here or an aperitif before dinner there. There is a great experiment you can do to get a good overview: collect all the bottles of alcohol you drink in a month and put them on a sideboard. You will see immediately if you “bend your elbow” a bit too often. If you are shocked at the number of bottles, you should drink less. You intuitively know how much is good for you. Be aware of the quantity you drink and don’t pretend that there’s nothing to think about.

2. Pay close attention to any disadvantageous consequences

If you suffer negative consequences due to your alcohol consumption, such as headaches, an inability to concentrate fully or a hangover, you must have drunk more than is good for you. Have you already been spoken to by a family member, friend or colleague because you drink too much or too often? Or have you ever driven after drinking? The following rule applies: if alcohol causes problems, then alcohol is a problem.

3. Take drinking breaks

Do you look forward to “your” whiskey, wine or beer after a day at work? That’s fine, but check to see if the drink itself has become important to you. If you feel uncomfortable about finishing the day with a soft drink or an alcohol-free beer, then that is exactly what you should do more often.

Do you find it difficult to go without drinking for a few weeks? Even if you do, try to overcome your reticence and detox your body at least once a year. You will feel the benefit.

4. Do not use alcohol as a solution

Hand on heart: do you drink more than normal during stressful times? If so, alcohol has taken on a solution function for you. The disadvantage of this is that we usually no longer develop any other inner solution mechanisms. This weakens our powers of self-control and, in turn, also our general well-being as people.

5. What else to consider

With many people, consumption patterns creep in over the years and they can develop into a problem without being noticed. For example, the increase to our tolerance levels: we need more alcohol to achieve the same effect. Compare the amount of alcohol you drink to 5 or 10 years ago.

Also, if you often find yourself thinking about what you could drink, or if there are times when it is important to you to hide your drinking from others, your consumption of alcohol can no longer be described as an enjoyment.

Alcohol distorts our self-perception. When we watch people who are drunk, we can tell that they would never behave that way when sober. The next day, they often don't know what effect they had on others. For this reason, if someone ever says to you something like, "You had a real thirst last night", you should ask them what effect you had on people when you were drunk – that will increase your healthy perception of yourself.

If you would like to learn more about when someone is said to be addicted to alcohol, we recommend the following:

www.dhs.de/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/Broschueren/Basisinfo_Alkohol.pdf



Or if you would like to test yourself:

www.kenn-dein-limit.de/selbst-tests/alkohol-selbst-test/
www.oberbergkliniken.de/selbsttest-alkoholabhaengigkeit



Enjoying Christmas in new splendour

Consciously enjoy change



Many of us associate the Christmas season with family visits, enjoying a glass of mulled wine with friends, the company's Christmas party and going to church. Unfortunately, much of this will not be possible this year. This presents us with new opportunities to organise the festive season differently and perhaps to return to the original sense of Christmas. What is Christmas really all about? It is a celebration of love and peace, and is also known as a "celebration of family".

The word "Christmas" is a shortened form of "Christ's mass" and it symbolises the birthday of Jesus Christ as well as the winter solstice which assures us that darkness will be followed by light.

This year, how about celebrating a really peaceful, atmospheric pre-Christmas period for ourselves and together with our loved ones? We could focus on opening up the doors to our hearts, interacting with others peacefully and finding a sense of calm. And taking the time to do something good for the people around us, particularly those who are alone and unhappy. For example, we could write them a postcard or letter, send a package or set aside a quiet moment for a phone call.

Our creativity will be put to the test this year if we want to make Christmas even better than before. But many others will give us a helping hand: some churches are planning open air services, while companies and clubs have invited people to virtual parties. For older relatives, it is high time to create a Skype account so everyone can enjoy a drink together. What else can we do to make this Christmas season special, despite the pandemic-related conditions? "Consciously enjoy the change", advises Mareike Fell, a counsellor at the Fürstenberg Institut. Have you always struggled with the hectic nature of the pre-Christmas period or with some of the traditional Christmas rituals? Now is the time to try out something different. Perhaps you could practise a Christmas song on your old musical instrument and give your loved ones a pleasant surprise? Or you could compose a story, a poem or a hand-written letter for them? What's more, how about sticking notes on objects around the home featuring your wishes for other people or descriptions of what you love about them? A completely different form of celebration also offers the opportunity to reallocate the various tasks and set new impulses. Ask your family members what they would really like to retain and think about how family traditions, like playing games together or going for a Christmas walk, could be conducted virtually. This doesn't mean taking your smartphone out with you, but perhaps you could arrange for everyone who goes for a walk to look for something symbolic in nature that they can tell everyone else about.

If you are feeling sad: Accept the way you feel but do not allow yourself to get bogged down in misery. You can also support and encourage the people close to you to see the positive side of this festive season. Start to look forward to this time together as well as to next Christmas when we can hopefully all celebrate together again, or plan an alternative family celebration in the summer. Having a positive perspective helps to get through the dark times.

You can also make use of the opportunity to wish for something nice, yet non-material. This could include some kind words, a good, recent photo, a voucher for your favourite cake or another delicious meal that you love.

And don't worry about the children – they will also enjoy a somewhat different Christmas celebration provided their parents are right behind it. If the parents struggle, the children will also wobble.



What always helps to get through the dark time of the year:

1. Treat yourself to something good! It is worth finding out what really strengthens us and makes us happy. Enjoy yourself and relax by, for example, wallowing in a foam bath or trying out a new shower lotion, or taking online courses in yoga or meditation, or going for a power walk.
2. Take the time for some peace and quiet. Whichever way you like it – but it should be really quiet and free of all distractions. A moment of peace and quiet will make you calmer and more relaxed, and this will help you to feel better.
3. Stay in contact. Cook (virtually) something tasty together with friends. Initiate an online get-together or invite colleagues and neighbours to a Zoom meeting for a wine tasting or a book presentation.
4. Stay physically active! Try to link nature, sport and light as often as you can.
5. Get out into the light! Whenever you can, make the most of the daylight hours even if it just means popping outside for a short while. Try and get yourself a daylight lamp too so that you have some UV light in your home.
6. Do a good deed for others. Send (elderly) relatives a postcard again, or some cookies or recent photos taken during the past year. Offer to help out with the Christmas shopping. Helping others is also balm for your own soul.

Pause and reflect

For many people, the end of the year is also a time to reflect on the past few months. With all the challenging changes, there were certainly (unexpectedly) good happenings for you too. We want to encourage you to write them down in black and white and to look into the future. Take your time. Perhaps alone, together with your loved ones on the phone or on video call.

You can download the template here:

www.fuerstenberg-institut.de/newsletter-ma-dezember-20/Innehalten-Reflexion.html

I have newly discovered this: _____ **and I want to maintain:** _____

_____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____
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It was difficult but I made it:

I enjoy remembering:

I indulge myself with:

I am looking forward to:

Changes to the law in 2021 Changes for families and pensioners

in
Germany



As of the coming year, the child allowance will be increased and new tax credits will apply. In addition, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth has approved changes to the rules governing parental allowance and parental leave in order to facilitate the reconciliation of work and family life. The legislator also plans to recognise the life achievement of around 1.3 million pensioners in the form of a new basic pension.

Increase to child allowance

To relieve the financial load on families, the Federal Government will raise child allowance as of 01.01.2021 by €15 per child. Parents will then receive €219 for their first and second children, plus €225 for a third child and €250 for a fourth child and upwards.

Increase to tax credits

In connection to the above, the child tax credit and the tax credit for care, education and training needs will be raised by €144 per parent, so that a parental couple will see an increase to €8,388 per year to which no income tax will apply. If the parents are separated, each parent will receive half the amount – €4,194.

The basic tax credit for adults as well as the highest amount of maintenance will increase to €9,696 respectively.

Change to the law on parental allowance and parental leave

This draft law will take effect as of 1 September 2021 and will apply to parents whose children are born as of this date.

■ More part-time work possible

During parental leave, it will be possible to work 32 (instead of the previous 30) hours per week in an effort to support a 4-day week.

■ More flexible partnership bonus

If both parents work part-time at the same time (24 to 32 hours per week), they will receive the so-called partnership bonus in the form of additional Parental Allowance Plus months. Previously, 4 months of parallel working time had to be completed, while in future parents can choose between two and four months.

■ More support for premature babies

If a child is born at least six weeks before the due date, parents will be entitled to one more basic parental allowance month or to two more Parental Allowance Plus months.

■ Lowering of the income limits

To finance these changes, only couples with a combined annual income of no more than €300,000 (rather than €500,000 previously) will receive parental allowance in future. For single parents, the limit will remain at €250,000.

Introduction of the basic pension

The basic pension will be introduced as a pension supplement as of 1 January 2021. In this way, the Federal Government wishes to recognise the life achievement of all those who have worked for at least 33 years, raised children or cared for relatives, and whose earnings were not sufficient for an adequate pension.

The amount of the supplement will be calculated on an individual basis – and there is no minimum figure for this. It is graded as of 33 years of basic pension time and reaches the full amount as of 35 years. The full basic pension is available up to a monthly income of €1,250 for single parents and €1,950 for couples. If the respective tax credit is exceeded, 60% of the excess income will be taken into account. Incomes above €1,600 for single parents and €2,300 for couples will be taken into account at the full amount.

The basic pension will be automatically verified by the Tax Office and the German Pension Insurance and then paid. Therefore, pensioners need not undertake any action in this matter.

Due to delays in legislation and the amount of administrative work involved for the Pension Insurance, the first basic pension assessments will probably be issued from the middle of 2021 at the earliest, and some of them much later. The basic pension supplement will, however, be paid retroactively as of 01.01.2021.

Challenges of long-distance caregiving

Being a family member with caregiving responsibilities is a serious challenge and often goes unnoticed. Approx. 3 million people in need of care receive out-patient care services from their care insurance company. And these people are cared for by around 4.4 to 5.4 million people who are mostly of a working age – the “country’s biggest care service”. According to the OECD, everyone will be an “informal” caregiver at least once in their lives.

Parents to children, children to parents, while partners as well as friends or neighbours play their various roles in the process – from the need for help to the legally recognised need for care.

The activities involved are wide-ranging. 82% of caregivers help with administrative and financial matters, and 79% do some shopping and provide household support. Fewer than half perform actual care work or clean the person involved, although these are the only ones who receive financial support. Caregiving often begins with doing some heavy shopping, such as crates of drinks, either together with the elderly person or independently of them. Cleaning jobs like cleaning the windows or doing some gardening work are increasingly taken on by the younger generation. This is added to later by helping out in the household and sometimes also by the coordination of doctor’s appointments and the organisation of external service providers like home care services.

Most caregivers are between 40 and 85 years old, while the care ratio increases all the way up to the age of 64. Around a quarter of all women and a fifth of all men between 60 and 64 care for others for health reasons. People who start a family in their mid to late thirties could see the care they provide double between the ages of 45 and 55. They will still need to look after their own children, while also being increasingly expected to help out in their original families. One in five people faces this dilemma: the sandwich generation. People who are not directly affected by this may still be indirectly affected, as their partner, for example, may be involved or one parent takes care of the other.

Long-distance caregiving is demanding

The situation is made even more difficult by the fact that many people no longer live in their home town or near their family.

82% of caregivers of working age do not live in the same household as the person in need of care and therefore provide care from a distance. They are therefore known as long-distance caregivers and face special challenges. If you live hundreds of miles away, you may not discover your parents’ difficulties for a long time. The short visits are often not enough to spot the underlying problems and the short time together is rarely spent discussing organisational matters or unpleasant topics. In many cases, the first areas of responsibility to be taken on are those which do not require a physical presence. These are organisational, coordinating and administrative tasks. From a distance, you can motivate, help to make decisions, offer information and do some organising. Some people also travel to their parents at weekends to help them take a shower, for example. It is not unusual for the need for care to occur suddenly and unexpectedly, often due to a fall or a serious illness. In such cases, a network of help needs to be organised quickly



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from afar. Even if care has been organised, there is still a challenge: the unhappy feeling of not knowing how your father or mother is doing at any given moment and not being able to respond to their needs. At the same time, having to make important decisions from a long way away affects your own everyday life and causes many people to feel tense.

Caregiving family members often find it difficult to reconcile their care work with their private life and job:

- The tasks involved take up a lot of time. There is less room for your own needs and for other members of your family. Unhappiness and relationship problems are often the consequence. Social contacts are reduced and this could lead to loneliness.
- The health of the caregiver and their own sense of well-being may suffer due to the physical and mental demands made of them. People are often affected by pressure and fear, which leads to mental stress that can also impact on work and private life.
- Work and career development take a back seat. Many people reduce their working times and this means they end up missing out on many things. Their participation in working life is reduced.

Lack of recognition leads to feelings of dissatisfaction

Studies show that it is not the care duties themselves that make caregivers unhappy. Instead, caregiving family members suffer from reconciling their care tasks with everything else in their lives, as well as the lack of recognition and visibility – in society and in their own family. This can lead to arguments among siblings if one person feels they are investing much more time in caring for their parents than others.



The care work provided by these helpers is barely recognised in public life. However, this work often causes emotional stress, frustration and conflicts. Old family conflicts are opened up, guilt is dished out and divisiveness is frequently the outcome.

What can you actually do as a caregiving family member?

- Seek out some counselling and find out in good time, if possible before the care situation becomes acute, about the local support services, the legal and medical circumstances, as well as the possibilities for financial support.
- Draw up a personalised care plan for your family members. As an employee of a customer of the Fürstenberg Institut's Work-Life Service, you are entitled to wide-ranging, unlimited support and counselling at any time by telephone, online video chat or face to face for free.

- Speak to your elderly family members in good time, and ask them about their own ideas and wishes should the need for care arise. Make an effort to get everyone else (e.g. siblings) involved too.
- Strengthen your own skills, such as by attending a care course, and pay attention to early signs of overload, exhaustion and depression.
- Set up a functioning network locally, particularly if you do not live nearby. Besides reliable contacts, this includes emergency management and the inclusion of local service providers. Don't forget that you also may not always be available or that you might need some time out now and then.
- Help and security can also be provided by electronic reminders to take medicine, for example, or by apps for planning and connecting everyone involved, as well as locating devices and fall recognition systems.

Information and support on the topic of Caregiving Family Members is available to customers of the Fürstenberg Institut's Work-Life Service from qualified counsellors, as well as in the customer log-in section on the website.

Source:

www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/pau/age/Policy_briefs/German/ECE-WG1-31-GER.pdf

New customer events 2021

Webinare and digital Lunch & Learn Sessions



The dates for our events in the first quarter of 2021 can now be booked online in the customer login on the website of the Fürstenberg Institute. As an employee of our client companies, you can use the extensive range of German and English language online events exclusively and free of charge. We have added many current topics to our webinars and also developed a new series of events for you: Digital Lunch & Learn Sessions. In this digital exchange format for the lunch break, Fürstenberg experts give a short impulse on various topics, followed by the opportunity to exchange ideas with employees of other companies.

**Further information and registration
in our customer log-in:**

www.fuerstenberg-institut.com/customer-login.html



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