



December 2025 Newsletter

Your Monthly Dose of Wellness, Growth, and Support



Embracing the Close of 2025: Rest, Reflection & Renewal

Dear friends,

As 2025 draws to a close, we invite you to take a deep breath and pause for a moment of reflection.

The end of the year often brings a mix of emotions gratitude for what has been, reflection on what could have been, and hope for what's to come. It's easy to fall into the trap of measuring success by completed goals or unfulfilled resolutions, but growth doesn't always show up as a checklist.

Sometimes it's softer found in the boundaries you've held, the self-compassion you've practised, or the ways you've shown up for yourself when life got heavy. Take time to reflect on these moments. It's important to recognize ourselves as acknowledgment on even the small wins helps build our self-confidence, and self-esteem.

As the new year approaches, give yourself permission to rest in the "in-between." Trust that your dreams are still in motion, even in the quiet seasons.

☆☆ In this month's newsletter:

- 📖 **Mental Health Spotlight:** The Power of Reflection & Gratitude
- 📖 **Health Spotlight:** Why Vitamin D Matters in the Winter Months
- 📖 **Wellness Spotlight:** Navigating Exercise & Nutrition During the Holidays
- 📖 **Healthy Holiday Recipe:** A Festive Non-Alcoholic Cranberry Spritz
- 📖 Start 2026 Strong:
Why Intentions Work Better Than New Year's Resolutions

Mental Health Spotlight

📖 Reflection, Gratitude & Inner Growth

As the year wraps up, we're given a natural pause, a chance to look inward, reflect on what the year held, and reconnect with what truly matters. Reflection helps us process experiences, notice our growth, and realign with values beyond surface-level achievements.

When we pair reflection with gratitude, we activate a powerful process for emotional well-being. Research shows that gratitude and reflective writing can reshape our emotional experience, improve mood, and support both mental and physical health.

📖 What the Research Shows

- **Lower depression and anxiety; higher positive mood:** People who regularly journal what they're thankful for report fewer symptoms of depression and anxiety and more positive emotion overall.
- **Greater life satisfaction:** Gratitude practices are consistently linked to better overall well-being and psychological wellness.
- **Reduced stress and increased calm:** Gratitude helps regulate the nervous system, lowering stress and physiological arousal and supporting a healthier "rest and digest" response. Gratitude doesn't need to be profound even appreciating your matching socks counts!

- **Better sleep:** Regular gratitude or reflection practices are associated with falling asleep more easily, deeper sleep, and better daytime energy.
- **Stronger emotional resilience:** During stress or major transitions, gratitude and self-reflection help people process experiences, find meaning, and stay grounded rather than spiralling into self-criticism.

In short, reflection + gratitude is far from “feel-good fluff.” It is a simple, evidence-informed tool that supports emotional regulation, resilience, and overall wellness.

▮ Self-Improvement Exercise

Try this brief end-of-year reflection:

- **Gratitude list:** Write down three things you’re genuinely grateful for big or small.
- **Growth note:** Identify one way you’ve grown emotionally or personally this year.
- **Intention statement:** Choose one intention or guiding value you want to carry into the new year. (We’ll explore intentions towards the end of this newsletter!)

Research shows that small, consistent gratitude practices even just a few minutes a week — offer the strongest long-term benefits.

▮ Why This Matters

For those who struggle with perfectionism, self-criticism, or the pressure to “achieve,” reflection and gratitude can be a gentle reset. Instead of asking, “*Did I do enough?*” this practice invites questions like: “*What felt meaningful? How did I grow? Who am I becoming?*”

This shift builds self-compassion, emotional resilience, and a stronger sense of identity all essential ingredients for long-term mental wellness, especially during times of change.

Health Spotlight

Getting Ahead of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) for A Happier Winter



As the days grow shorter and temperatures drop, many people notice shifts in their mood and energy. For some, these changes go beyond the typical “winter blues” and develop into a form of depression known as Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). If you find yourself feeling sad, fatigued, or withdrawn during specific times of the year, especially in the colder months, it’s helpful to understand what SAD is and how you can support your mental health.

What Is Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)?

Seasonal Affective Disorder is a type of depression that occurs at the same time each year, most often in the fall and winter. It is thought to be triggered by the reduced levels of sunlight, which disrupt our body’s internal clock, leading to changes in mood, energy, and sleep patterns. Though SAD is most commonly associated with winter, some people experience it in the spring or summer, but this is less common.

Treatment Options for Seasonal Affective Disorder

A variety of treatments have been studied for SAD. The two most effective lifestyle approaches supported by current research are bright light therapy and exercise. We’ll focus on these today.

Light Therapy (Phototherapy)

Light therapy is one of the best-researched treatments for SAD. It involves sitting near a specially designed lightbox that emits bright, artificial light to mimic natural sunlight.

A recent meta-analysis found that light intensity between 1,000 and 5,000 lumens used in the early morning was most effective for reducing SAD symptoms and improving energy. According to this research, light intensities outside this range appear less beneficial. The study recommends using the lightbox for no more than one hour per day.

In clinical trials, bright light therapy reduced depression scores by 37% more than dim-light placebo treatments. “Bright light” in these studies was defined as intensities greater than 1,000 lumens.

Potential side effects may include mild burning, nausea, headache, eye fatigue, phototoxicity, and temporary skin redness or itching. These effects are often minimized by choosing UV-free devices. Bright light therapy can trigger mania or hypomania in those with bipolar disorder. If a lamp emits UV light, long-term use may increase skin cancer risk. It's wise to speak with your healthcare provider before beginning light therapy to ensure you select a safe device and understand how to use it correctly. Effective devices are quite affordable.

Exercise and Physical Activity

Regular physical activity, especially outdoors, can lift mood by boosting endorphins and serotonin, making it a valuable tool for managing depression. Exercise is well-established as an effective treatment for non-seasonal depression, though fewer studies focus specifically on SAD.

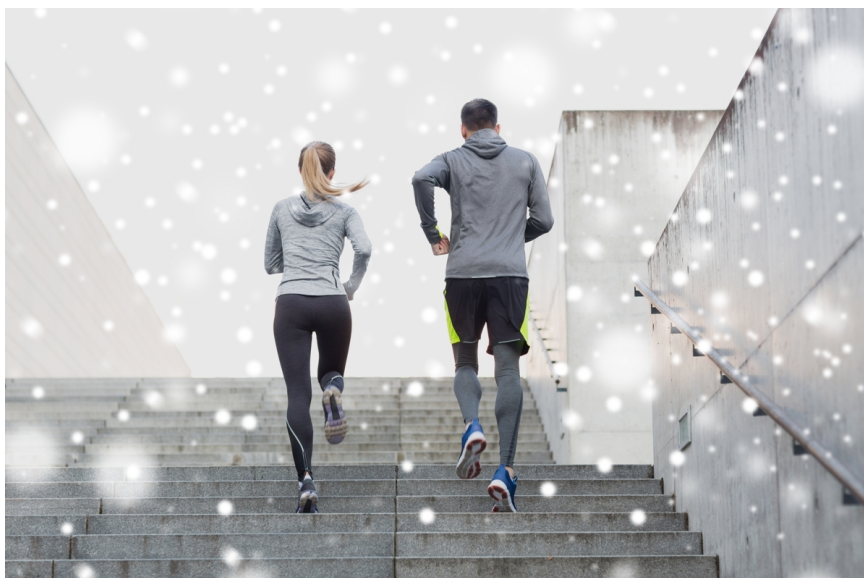
One small, week-long study compared 1 hour of cycling daily to 2 hours of bright light therapy and to a placebo group. Both the exercise and light therapy groups showed meaningful improvements in winter depression symptoms, with the exercise group improving by 68.5%, the light therapy group by 64.5%, and the placebo group by only 5%. While short and preliminary, this study suggests that both interventions can work quickly and effectively.

Next Steps

If you suspect you may have SAD and self-care strategies aren't providing enough relief, consider speaking with a healthcare provider or mental health professional. A proper diagnosis and personalized treatment plan can help you navigate the winter season with more ease and resilience.

Wellness Spotlight

▮ Exercise & Nutrition During the Holidays



The holidays are a time of joy and connection—but also a time when routines often shift. Instead of striving for perfection, focus on **balance and kindness toward yourself**.

Gentle reminders:

- **Move for joy.** Whether it's a walk in the snow, dancing in your kitchen, or stretching before bed—movement supports both your body and mind.
- **Eat mindfully.** Enjoy your favourite holiday treats without guilt. Savour the flavours, eat slowly, and listen to your body's cues.
- **Stay hydrated.** Dehydration can amplify fatigue and cravings—keep a water bottle nearby.
- **Prioritize rest.** The nervous system needs downtime just as much as movement.

Wellness doesn't mean restriction—it means *connection* to what helps you feel your best.

Looking to start your new year off right? Work with our wonderful certified personal trainer and nutrition coach.

[Start Your Health Routine Today](#)

▮ Festive Non-Alcoholic Drink Recipe: Cranberry Citrus Spritz

This sparkling mocktail is a beautiful, refreshing way to celebrate the season—without the hangover.

Ingredients:

- ½ cup 100% cranberry juice
- ¼ cup fresh orange juice
- 1 tsp honey or maple syrup (optional)
- Sparkling water or club soda
- Fresh cranberries and a sprig of rosemary for garnish

Instructions:



1. In a glass, combine cranberry juice, orange juice, and sweetener.
2. Add ice and top with sparkling water.
3. Garnish with cranberries and rosemary for a festive touch.

Light, tart, and uplifting—just like the season's best moments.

Upcoming Events

January - New Year Course Launch



Design Your Best Year Yet: Reclaim your Focus, Energy & Direction in 2026

We all do it, set ambitious goals in January, only to lose momentum by February. But this year can be different. If you're craving more clarity, structure, and balance in the year ahead, this workshop was designed for you.

So many people move through life feeling overwhelmed by responsibilities, disconnected from their goals, or unsure how to create routines that actually last. Research consistently shows that when we pair **intention** with **structured planning**, we experience better emotional regulation, higher motivation, and more follow-through. In other words: when you have a system, you create space for success.

That's why we're launching a brand-new program this year — a gentle but transformational course built around a **specialized planner** that helps you:

▮ Get and Stay Organized

Learn how to structure your days and weeks in a way that supports *your* goals, not someone else's expectations.

⚡ Increase Productivity Without Burnout

Shift from frantic effort to focused action, using evidence-based strategies from psychology and habit-formation research.

▮ **Achieve Meaningful Goals**

Move from “wanting” to “doing” with a planner that breaks your goals into small, achievable steps you can actually stick to.

▮ **Improve Work–Life Balance**

Create clearer boundaries, reduce overwhelm, and build routines that make space for rest, joy, and connection.

▮ **Build New Habits & Keep Them**

Use proven behavioural strategies that help habits stick not through willpower, but through structure and repetition.

▮ **Become the Best Version of YOU**

This course helps you design a life that aligns with your values — so you feel more grounded, intentional, and fulfilled each day.

Why This Course Works

This isn't another “New Year, new you” push. It's a supportive, psychologically grounded program that teaches you how to create sustainable change — the kind that feels good, lasts longer, and brings you closer to who you want to be.

With guided lessons, and reflection prompts, and a planner built for real life (not perfection), you'll walk away with:

- Clear direction
- A strong sense of purpose
- A calm, organized mindset
- Routines that support your mental, emotional, and physical health

If you're ready for a year that feels intentional, balanced, and fully aligned with your best self, this course was made for you.

☆☆ **Registration is now open — limited spots available.**

Start the new year with clarity, confidence, and a plan that supports the life you're ready to build.

Educators: Dr. Ali McMillan - Naturopathic Doctor & Coleen Adderley - Registered Clinical Counsellor

Date: January 17, 2025

Time: 9:00 - 1:00pm

Cost: \$112.11 (Includes an incredible planner and all the supplies you will need)

[Reserve Your Spot Here](#)

Did You Know?

▮ Practitioner Spotlight: Meet Kyle Loney, Registered Clinical Counsellor ▮



This month, we're highlighting one of our incredible team members, **Kyle**, a Registered Clinical Counsellor whose work reflects compassion, authenticity, and intentional growth.

Born and raised in Kelowna, Kyle has a deep connection to the community and understands the unique challenges that individuals in our city face. His path to becoming a counsellor has been shaped by his own experiences — through volunteering, work in the service industry, and his journey as a client himself. This combination of personal insight and professional expertise has shaped his **client-centered, goal-focused approach** to therapy.

Kyle believes that **life is a continuous journey of learning and growth**, but that growth can only thrive in safe and supportive environments. In his work, he creates a space where clients can explore openly, build insight, and find the tools to create meaningful change in their daily lives. He emphasizes that a well-lived life stems from **feeling fully, living connected, and acting consciously**.

▮ Therapeutic Approach

Kyle's counselling style is both structured and deeply human. He blends several evidence-based modalities to meet each client's individual needs, including:

- **Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)**
- **Existential Therapy**
- **Internal Family Systems (IFS)**
- **Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT)**
- **Exposure Response Prevention (ERP)**

This integrative approach allows clients to gain deeper self-understanding, regulate emotional responses, and take action toward what matters most to them. His trauma-informed focus keeps therapy grounded in both safety and forward movement, helping clients stay motivated and make lasting progress.

▮ Areas of Specialization

Kyle offers both **in-person and virtual counselling** and works with clients across a range of issues, including:

- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) & Anxiety
- Health Anxiety & Death Anxiety
- Complex Trauma & Relational Difficulties
- Perfectionism & People-Pleasing
- Depression, Burnout & Lack of Motivation
- Trauma, Intrusive Thoughts & Dissociation
- Emotional Regulation & Distress Tolerance
- Self-Esteem, Confidence & Assertiveness
- Grief, Loss & Life Transition
- Other Mental Health Concerns

▮ Kyle's Philosophy

Kyle's clients often describe his approach as *warm, empowering, and deeply grounding*. He helps clients feel comfortable enough to do the sometimes-difficult work of getting back to themselves. As Kyle puts it, therapy isn't just about symptom relief — it's about helping people reconnect with who they are and create lives that feel more authentic and meaningful.

☆☆ If you're ready to begin that process of rediscovery and growth, **Kyle is currently accepting new clients** for both in-person and online sessions.

[Book Appointment Now](#)

Why Intentions Work Better Than New Year's Resolutions



As the year comes to a close, many people start thinking about change. For decades, New Year's resolutions have been seen as the way to begin fresh—promising ourselves we'll exercise more, eat better, save money, or finally slow down.

Yet research continues to show that most resolutions lose momentum by February. This isn't because people are lazy or unmotivated. It's because resolutions are built on pressure, perfection, and pass-or-fail thinking—three things the human brain doesn't respond well to under stress.

Intentions offer a healthier alternative. They're flexible, compassionate, and grounded in values rather than rule-setting. For many, intentions create a more sustainable path toward meaningful change.

Why Resolutions Often Fail

Resolutions tend to focus on strict outcomes—*lose 20 pounds, stop eating sugar, work out every day*. While these goals sound motivating at first, they activate the brain's threat system when progress isn't perfect. A few reasons they collapse:

1. They rely on willpower alone

Willpower is a limited resource. Under stress, fatigue, or emotional overwhelm, it drops quickly. When resolutions depend on constant discipline, any slip can feel like failure.

2. They invite all-or-nothing thinking

Psychologically, resolutions often trigger rigid patterns: *“If I can’t do it every day, I’ve failed.”* This mindset increases shame and discouragement, which makes it harder to continue.

3. They ignore the role of emotion and identity

Research shows behaviour change sticks when linked to identity and values—not external expectations. Resolutions tend to focus on *what* to change, not *why* it matters to you.

Why Intentions Support Real, Lasting Change

Intentions shift the focus from strict rules to mindful direction. Instead of demanding a specific outcome, they encourage you to align your daily choices with how you want to feel and who you want to become.

1. Intentions lower stress and self-criticism

Intentions are gentle by design. They honour the natural ups and downs of life, reducing the shame cycle often linked with unmet resolutions. This activates the brain’s “tend-and-befriend” system, improving motivation and emotional resilience.

2. They support values-based living

Psychological models like Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) show that behaviour rooted in personal values creates more consistent, long-term change.

Examples:

- *“I intend to care for my body”*
- *“I intend to create more calm in my life”*
- *“I intend to show up with kindness—toward myself and others.”*

These statements guide behaviour without demanding perfection.

3. Intentions encourage mindful behaviour

Intentions invite you to check in with yourself throughout the day. This improves emotional regulation and strengthens the brain pathways connected to self-awareness and follow-through.

4. They adapt as life changes

If you’re sick one week or overwhelmed the next, an intention can shift with you—without abandoning your direction. Flexibility is key for real growth.

Examples: Resolution vs. Intention

Traditional Resolution

“I will lose 20 lbs.”

“I will go to the gym every day.”

“I will stop eating junk food.”

“I will stop procrastinating.”

Intention-Based Alternative

“I intend to nourish my body and support my health.”

“I intend to move in ways that make me feel strong and energized.”

“I intend to make food choices that honour my well-being.”

“I intend to create space for focus and follow-through.”

The intention focuses on your *why*. It helps you reconnect with your values, even on harder days.

How to Set Intentions That Stick

1. Start with how you want to feel.

Examples: calmer, stronger, more confident, more connected, more grounded.

2. Link the feeling to a value.

For example:

- Calm → value of balance
- Strength → value of health
- Connection → value of relationships

3. Create a simple guiding statement.

“I intend to...” statements are powerful because they anchor identity, not performance.

4. Revisit your intention often.

Morning check-ins, journaling, sticky notes on your mirror—these keep your intention alive in your daily choices.

A New Year's Practice to Try

Take a quiet moment and write:

- **Three values** that matter to you right now
- **One intention** that reflects those values
- **One small action** you can do weekly that aligns with that intention

This practice creates a foundation for change that feels supportive—not punishing.

You don't need a resolution to change your life. You need clarity about what matters most, compassion for your humanness, and an intention that guides your choices.

Intentions help you grow without forcing perfection. They help you move into the new year with steadiness, purpose, and self-respect.

Closing Thoughts

As we reach the end of another year, we hope you're able to carve out moments of rest, reflection, and connection moments that remind you of your strength, your growth, and the parts of yourself that deserve tenderness. The transition into a new year isn't about reinventing who you are; it's about gently realigning with what matters most and giving yourself permission to move forward with clarity and compassion.

As you welcome 2026, consider setting **intentions** rather than resolutions. Intentions are not rigid goals they're guiding values that help shape your choices and keep you connected to the life you want to build. Whether your intention is to slow down, seek balance, nurture relationships, or care for your mental health more deeply, let it be something that supports you rather than pressures you. Small, consistent steps grounded in intention often lead to the most meaningful change.

From all of us at Reflective Soul Therapy & Wellness, we wish you a peaceful holiday season and a hopeful, heart-centered start to the new year.

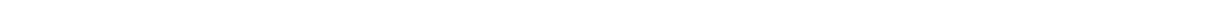
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