Winter can be great for the young, fit and healthy. Nothing says Christmas like some snow over the holiday period.

But for many old folks, winter can be a cause of misery, potentially avoidable illness and injury, and even death. Plummeting temperatures, snow and icy conditions, cold homes and shorter days can leave old people feeling isolated, lonely and helpless, with many hardly leaving their home. It's not just old folks living in isolated areas who feel lonely, people living in towns and cities can feel just as isolated and alone...

During the winter months there is also a dramatic increase in illness (respiratory problems, pneumonia, depression) and injury from trips and falls for the over 65s. Things are made worse for people with low income (so can't afford heating), have no family, or have a long-term health condition or are disabled.

I know you are busy, I know you have your own problems, but do a good thing this Christmas – if you know an old person (perhaps even a relative) who might appreciate a little company, help or support, go do it. **You have the power right now to make a difference to someone else's life.** You don’t have to do much to make a big difference, BUT, what you do do might just be the nicest thing that happens to them this Christmas.
Here are some examples of things you can do:

- Just call round and say hello and show an interest in them.
- Call round and ask them if there is anything they need.
- Make an extra warm meal and take it around to them, this could be a huge gesture to someone on Christmas day.
- Invite them to have dinner with your family.
- Offer to walk/groom their dog.
- Help clear snow and ice from around their home.
- Help with the grocery shopping. Either do their shopping for them or offer to take them with you.
- Ensure that their refrigerator and pantry is stocked with the basic essentials.
- Encourage them to go outdoors for a short walk or a trip to the playground with the kids.
- Help with house chores
- Help them keep their home warm. Make sure their heating is set correctly, check for drafty doors/windows. Chop some wood for their fire.
- Help them keep themselves warm. Check they have appropriate warm clothing and additional blankets for the cold weather.
- If they appear to be in ill health, recommend they visit, or offer to take them, to the doctor.
- Offer to pick up prescriptions.

**Most importantly, just show some compassion and respect their dignity.**