

The Declarations Quarterly

Winter 2026 | Edition 41

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THE 12 DAYS OF MENTAL WELLNESS



The holidays can be joyful, stressful, or both. These 12 small practices are meant to support mental wellness without adding pressure. You don't have to do all 12 – even one counts!

1 HYDRATION RESET

Drink one full glass of water before your first coffee or caffeinated beverage.



2 BREATHE PURPOSEFULLY

2



Take 5 slow breaths, exhale longer than your inhale.

NAME A WIN

Write down one thing you handled well this week – big or small.



4 MOVE GENTLY

4



Stretch, take a short walk, or stand up and move for 5 minutes.

5 CONNECT INTENTIONALLY

5



Send a kind message or thank-you to a friend, loved one, or coworker.

6 UNPLUG BRIEFLY

6



Step away from your phone for a half hour with no multitasking.

7 SET ONE BOUNDARY

7



Say no, log off on time, or delegate something you don't need to carry alone.

Name:
3 things you see
2 things you hear
1 thing you feel in your body.

8 GROUND YOUR SENSES

8

9 SELF-COMPASSION CHECK



Notice one way you've been hard on yourself, then rephrase it as if you were speaking to a friend.

10 REST WITHOUT GUILT

Take a break without "earning" it first.



11 LET SOMETHING GO



Release one expectation, task, or thought that's adding unnecessary pressure.

12 LOOK AHEAD KINDLY



Set one gentle intention for January (not a resolution).

SUBMITTED BY: ALEXA RASPANTE, REGISTERED NURSE





A Bad Break and a Good Recovery

Kellen Polito, Director of Quality Assurance

It was Friday, 9/5/25, and I was playing softball with a group of friends. Everything was going great—lots of laughs and solid softball all around. While playing shortstop, I moved to my left to track down a hard-hit ball. I stumbled, dove, and landed directly on my left shoulder. Immediately, I knew something was wrong. Intense pain shot through my shoulder and down my arm. Having experienced this kind of injury before, in the same area, I had a sinking realization: I had broken my left clavicle—my collarbone—clean in half. On 9/9/25, I underwent surgery to repair the break, officially beginning the journey along the road to recovery. As the recovery process unfolded, I quickly learned the importance of family and community support. During times like these, help becomes essential—whether it's rides to appointments, assistance around the house, or simply encouragement on difficult days. Physical therapy, while challenging,

played a critical role in regaining strength and confidence. Each session can feel like a small hurdle, but together they represent steady progress toward healing. Celebrating those small victories was key to staying motivated, even when recovery feels slow. As the holiday season approached, preparation took on a whole new meaning. Planning ahead, simplifying traditions, and sharing responsibilities helped reduce stress and created space to focus on healing. This holiday season looked different, but those changes reinforced what matters most: connection, patience, and gratitude. We never plan for unexpected life events—after all, who expects to break their collarbone playing softball? As we enter the new year, let's not wait for the unexpected to remind us how important the people around us are, or how meaningful the little things can be. Instead, let's choose to embrace those simple joys each and every day.



Winter Self-Care Checklist

Alicia, Greaney, BSW/Adams Team Leader

Winter can be a hard time for many, so it is important to check in with ourselves and combat the winter blues. One way is through practicing self-care, but this can still be a challenge when the days are shorter, the air is chilly, and there is less sunlight. The following checklist includes some ways we can all practice self-care this winter.

Mind

- Read a new book
- Journaling a check-in with yourself
- Make time to connect with loved ones

Home

- Maximize light by opening curtains
- Take time to declutter
- Enjoy warm comforts (hot chocolate, warm socks, blankets)

Body

- Stay active with indoor activities like yoga and dance
- Use skin care to combat dry skin
- Enjoy a warm, hearty soup

Activities and Habits

- Limit screentime
- Color/paint by numbers
- Bake something new
- Try a new hobby!





Pistachio Tiramisu

Jennifer Beattie, Director of CSS Admin.

Every holiday, we go to my mother-in-law's house and I try to make a dessert that everyone can enjoy--cookies, dirt pudding, vanilla trifle, Oreo balls/cake pops. This year, we made our usual desserts, but I also decided to make something just for me--pistachio tiramisu.

I have always been a big fan of pistachio nuts, and I am an avid coffee drinker. I had been eyeing this recipe for weeks and finally realized that it is okay to make something that maybe only I will like--we deserve to treat ourselves, too!

Here is the recipe from Isabella Sweets that I brought for the holidays and am planning to make again just for my family at home--it was a big hit! I did make some adjustments, which I have italicized below.

Ingredients

- 1 cup of cold espresso-strength coffee (*I bought pre-made unsweetened espresso coffee*)
- 1 cup cold heavy cream or whipping cream
- 2/3 cup powdered sugar
- 1/3 cup pistachio butter or finely ground pistachios mixed with milk to form a paste
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1/2 cup *finely ground* pistachios
- 200-250g ladyfinger biscuits or sponge cake fingers (*possibly 2 boxes of packaged ladyfinger biscuits*)
- Additional *finely ground* pistachios for topping
- Optional: melted dark chocolate or cocoa powder for garnish

Equipment

- 1 mixing bowl for whipping cream
- 1 bowl to mix other ingredients
- 1 shallow dish for coffee soak
- 1 spatula for layering

Instructions

1. Whip cold heavy cream in a bowl until soft peaks form.
2. In another bowl, mix marscapone cheese, powdered sugar, pistachio butter/paste, and vanilla extract until smooth.
3. Gently fold the whipped cream into the marscapone mixture until creamy and smooth. Fold in ground pistachios.
4. Pour coffee into a shallow dish. Quickly dip each ladyfinger biscuit in the coffee without soaking too long to prevent sogginess.
5. Layer dipped ladyfinger biscuits at the bottom of a rectangular or square dish.
6. Spread half of the pistachio cream mixture evenly over this layer.
7. Repeat with another layer of dipped ladyfinger biscuits and the remaining pistachio cream mixture. Smooth with a spatula.
8. Sprinkle additional *ground* pistachios on top. If desired, top with drizzled chocolate or cocoa powder.
9. Cover and refrigerate for at least 4-6 hours, preferably overnight, to allow it to set.
10. Serve chilled. **Note:** *I found that it tasted better on the second day after it was ready to serve, maybe because all the flavors had more time to meld together.*

Original recipe and picture: <https://isabellasweets.com/pistachio-tiramisu>



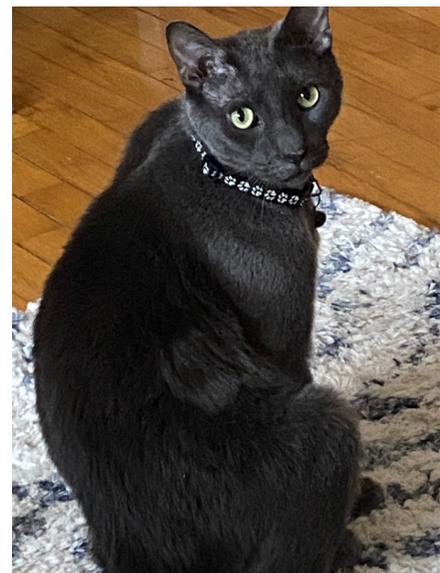
CONSUMER SPOTLIGHT: BIANCA



I remember when I met my first life coach with Declarations. I instantly felt so relieved and at home when she and the other life coaches would take me out to the mall on their visits with me at the state hospital. My parents were even astounded with how well my first life coach knew me, saying “Oh my gosh she really knows you!” And I was so touched that this professional got to know me so well. I can say the same for

my life coaches now. They are both so charming and friendly. They are so supportive of me and help me at my meetings with my psychiatrist and doctors. My life coach is my right hand go-to person! I have worked with many amazing nurses and other staff members who have been really kind and compassionate who have helped me embrace myself more.

Declarations has been such a great agency! I have come so far living on my own that I was able to rescue a 4 year old cat from the animal shelter where I volunteer and we are both so happy to have each other! Declarations has provided me with the strength and dignity to live on my own in a beautiful one-bedroom apartment by the beach and I thank them so much for their outstanding care and support!



New Year, New Goals: 2026 has the ability to be your year!

The start of the new year is a great time to pause, reflect, and reset. Many of us begin each new year with the intention to accomplish goals, however without a clear plan, those goals could get lost in translation. The beginning of 2026 is a great opportunity to shift from simply thinking about goals to intentionally setting them - leading to taking action to accomplish goals.

Big or small - goals give us direction. Setting goals provides a path for self-improvement, giving us something meaningful to work towards. Whether it be making your bed every morning, starting a savings account, or spending less time on your phone during the day - setting goals give your actions meaningful direction.

I want to highlight the benefits I have found in using the goal-setting tool known as a bucket list.



Moving Forward

This new year is not about doing everything at once. It's about intention and taking meaningful steps towards a more fulfilling life. I am using this new year as a way to break old habits and make myself aware of what patterns I fall back into. I recommend that you reflect on the same parts of yourself using goal setting tools. Whether you're creating a 2026 bucket list, working towards existing goals, or starting fresh, the most important part is to begin.

As we move through the winter, consider what you want to work toward, and give yourself permission to dream big while starting small. Talk to staff about assisting you with setting intentions for 2026, we are here to help!

Photo #1 source: [2026 stock photos, royalty-free images, vectors, video](#)

Photo #2 source: [Bucket list stock photos, royalty-free images, vectors, video](#)

New Year, New Goals

Kaitlyn Beard, Sherman Life Coach 1



The Benefit of a Bucket List

Something I do every year is create a yearly bucket list. Yes, a bucket list can be used for goals that can be described as "wishful thinking" or "far out" like travel destinations or landing your dream job... but a bucket list can also be a tool to remind yourself of your purpose. I like to think of it as a way to remind myself of what I am working towards! A bucket list is a great way to document your intention for the year and including a mix of short- and long-term goals creates an enjoyable and meaningful process!

A bucket list encourages creativity in your goal setting, helping clarify priorities and reminding us that goals do not have to be practical- they can be exciting and motivating as well, even if they are a little "far out."



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Wonderful Winter Celebrations



Join us in celebrating the following winter milestones:

January	February	March
<i>Birthdays</i>		
Kaitlyn Beard - 1/20 Olivia McGinley - 1/22	Daria Sbraccia - 2/1 Alicia Greaney - 2/6	Alexandra Schueler - 3/6 Kerri Eger - 3/18
<i>Work Anniversaries</i>		
Kerri Eger - 1/12/09 - 17 yrs Alicia Greaney - 1/18/22 - 4 yrs Olivia McGinley - 1/28/25 - 1 yr Camryn LaSala - 1/7/25 - 1 yr	James Marhold - 2/26/03 - 23 yrs	Jennifer Beattie - 3/26/12 - 14 yrs
<i>Other Updates:</i>		
<p>Shauna Fontenelli will be returning from maternity leave at the end of January 2026 - welcome back and congratulations, to Shauna and her family!</p> <p>Congratulations to Olivia McGinley, who was promoted to the Assistant Director of Nursing!</p>		
<p style="text-align: center;">The agency is welcoming the following new staff: Bella Marinich, Franklin Life Coach 1 (January 2026); Kelly Layton, Registered Nurse (January 2026)</p>		

Photo by Jill Wellington: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/close-up-of-frappe-drink-327131/>

