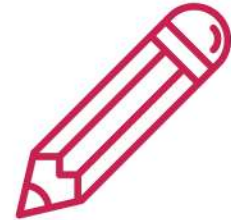


# 'OH CHRISTMAS TREE'

By Chris King

This is an active exercise so please have some pencils, paper, or a drawing app available to use if you would like to take part. There are also a few physical excises you might like to try. Please be ready to stop the recording so you have time to try out any of these activities. So perhaps collect any of these items and then play the recording.

Okay, how would you draw a Christmas tree?



Well, perhaps try. Stop the recording and have a go and when you are finished, we will continue.



Now, I wonder does your Christmas tree look anything like this one?

Or maybe it's like this one...



Well, which is right?

To help us find out, let's first get a feel for what it's like for the tree to have its branches in these positions by using your arms. And yes, I know trees don't have muscles and you don't have leaves, but we can still experiment with this...

So, first, notice how your shoulders and arms feel and then very slowly bring your arms up to a position which is similar to the first Christmas tree with your arms like those branches pointing a bit downwards. And then hold your arms in this position for 5 slow breaths, noticing what your arms feel like as you do this and then gently lower your arms until they are by your side again.

OK, well done.



Now perhaps have another go but this time, allow your arms to rise ever so slowly until they are pointing upwards like the branches of the second Christmas tree and as you hold your arms for another 5 slow breaths, maybe notice how heavy your arms begin to feel... and then gradually bring your arms slowly down, once again to your sides.



Brilliant! And how do your shoulders feel now? A bit tighter or perhaps a little looser and more relaxed? Just notice...

What did you find out? Which branch position, made your arms feel more tired and heavy?



So which drawing do you think is correct?

Well, both.

A Christmas tree growing in the wild generally has its branches pointing upwards, but as the sky grows dark and it snows, more and more weight gathers on its branches, with each and every snowflake until the branches can sometimes begin to point downwards.



And this is a bit like us. Sometimes we can feel light and happy as if our inner branches are reaching towards the sky, while at other times maybe something happens that makes us feel heavy and a bit low, just as if our inner branches are pointing down towards the earth.

This is normal and happens a lot during holidays, particularly at Christmas. One moment we may be feeling fantastic as we open a present, but then feel low because we can't play with it because we don't have the batteries.

So what, if anything, can we learn from this...from the trees?

Well, their downward branches point to the earth and remind them that they have deep roots which help them to stand tall, solid and strong even in the heaviest snow storms. And once the warmth of the sun returns, that great weight of snow will melt away and their branches will rise upwards once again towards the sky.



So maybe we can learn from these Christmas trees and when you feel a bit low, perhaps imagine your body is like a tree. Feel the air against your face and hands, and let your feet rest flat against the floor and take your attention from the very top of your head, through your body, down to your toes. Maybe wiggle them a little and feel the space around them and the touch of shoes, socks or air. Notice the weight of your body pressing down along the bottom of your feet all the way from the toes to your heels. Do your feet feel warm or cool, dry or moist?

And maybe like a tree, imagine growing a set of strong roots deep down into the earth below you...calm...cool and strong. Feel like a mighty Christmas tree standing in bright sunlight, melting away the weight of your worries and maybe let your inner lights of fun glow bright and colourful once again.

**THANKS FOR LISTENING!**