

How to beat the winter blues

When freezing temperatures, grey skies and the occasional polar vortex blast gets you down, it sometimes seems like winter will never end. If the Winter Blues are zapping your energy here are some things that can lift your spirits.

Exercise. It can be hard to find the motivation to exercise when all you want to do is bundle up on the couch with a good book and a warm duvet, but exercise really does help. When you exercise, your body releases chemicals that boost your sense of well-being and suppresses hormones that cause stress and anxiety.

Eat Healthy. What you eat has a great affect on your mood and energy. Avoid refined and processed foods, which lack nutrients. They actually zap your energy. Eat more complex carbohydrates like veggies and fruit and remember to drink 8 cups of water. Healthy food provides the body with nutrients which stabilizes your energy levels.

Get Some Sun. Spending time outdoors and exposure to Vitamin D improves your mood. Similar to exercise the sunlight releases chemicals that affect your mood. Lack of sunlight can cause many people to become depressed without knowing why. Keep your shades up during the day, sit near a window in restaurants or during class. Also try changing your light bulbs to 'full spectrum' bulbs which mimic natural light and actually have the same affects on your mind as the sun itself.

Treat Yourself. Having something to look forward to can keep anyone motivated. Winter can seem endless however, if you plan something exciting, your mood improves when you're anticipating it and when the event finally happens. Whether its a day at the spa, a night away or an entire week away plan something exciting.

Relax. Even if you enjoy being busy, everyone needs time off every now and then. Don't be afraid to say no in order to spend some time just doing nothing! Read a book, sleep in on the weekend, going to bed early, trying meditation or take a yoga class. Relaxing can alleviate stress while mental exercise like meditating enforces positive thinking.

Embrace the Season. Look for the best the season has to offer instead of avoiding the cold and snow. Find a winter sport that you enjoy while the opportunity lasts. After all they're only here for a few months out of the year. With all the fun activities winter has to offer seeing it in a positive light will keep your spirits high.

Catch some ZZZZZZ's. We all like to hibernate in the winter, however oversleeping can actually make you more tired. Aim for 7-8 hours of sleep each night and try to keep your bed time and wake time consistent. With time management and self discipline, making your sleeping patterns regular gives you more energy.

Ask for Help. Do not underestimate the power of friends, family, co-workers and neighbours.

Keep a mental list of people who you can ask for help or encouragement when you need a pick-me-up. Sometimes a simple phone call, email or chat over coffee can brighten your mood.

By Michelle Austen