

The York University Staff Association Health and Wellness News and Views

Another Valentine's Day has come and gone, and getting out of bed in the mornings seems a little harder than usual. You wake up and it's dark, you get off work and it's dark... You might be starting to feel the effects of the winter blues. What is the secret to beating those winter blues?? No, it's not jet setting away to that southern destination (though I don't know anyone who would turn it down) Luckily there is a lot we can do to both prevent the blues from coming on and to get ourselves back to normal if we are already feeling them.

Depending on the severity of winter blues, they can result in a medical condition called seasonal affective disorder (SAD). One in five Canadians suffer from SAD, which in its most severe cases causes sufferers such strong symptoms of lethargy, fatigue and depression that it can seriously disrupt their lives. Experts believe that daylight triggers a reaction in our bodies each morning that boosts levels of serotonin, the chemical that makes us feel happy. Due to shorter days and longer nights the body produces less serotonin which can lead to depression. While we can't change the circumstances of winter, here are some secrets that just might turn your S.A.D. ☹ into happy ☺.



Embrace the Season

Well you may feel like hibernating inside, getting out in the fresh air, whatever the weather could really brighten your mood. After all, we all could use a little more vitamin "D". See winter in a positive light. Look for the best that winter has to offer! Participate in winter sports. Skating, skiing, snowshoeing, and even sledding.

Staying active in the winter air will brighten your senses, boost your energy, and keep your spirits high.

Exercise

As if we needed yet another reason to get fit!!! Research has proven many times over that exercise can help relieve depression and the effects of winter blues. Exercise gets our endorphins flowing and forces us to move, rather than falling into a lazy rut. If you have found it difficult to keep up an exercise routine during the winter, take some time during your lunch break and participate in YUSA's free lunchtime fitness program. The effects of a good workout will give you more energy, boost your metabolism and release those "feel good chemicals" that will be sure to improve your mood!



Treat Yourself

When winter seems endless, having something to look forward to can keep anyone motivated. Check out different local venues, concerts, shows, attend a sporting event, meet a friend for coffee, or plan a girls/guys night out. Social interaction forces you to put on a smile (well most of the time). It is important to spend time with friends and family. The point is to get out of the rut of office, home, bed, - so easy to fall into when it's freezing cold outside. Filling your free time with friends and fun things to do will help you stay positive and energized throughout the dark winter months. **Stay positive and stay warm! Spring will be here before we know it.**

Kerriane Brown

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