

The York University Staff Association Health and Wellness News and Views

Winter is in full force. As the days have gotten shorter the nights are getting colder, even the best of us can get a little down. The "February Blues" as often referred to are characterized by the mild depression, lack of motivation, and low energy that many people experience during this cold season. Unfortunately we can't make the days longer and the nights warmer however there are a few things we can do to combat the "blues" or should I say "blahs".

So you think you *can't* dance? Well I'm here to tell you there's no right or wrong way to shake that booty and doing it might very well be the boost you are looking for. Dancing is an excellent form of exercise because it not only burns calories and builds muscle, but it also contributes to an overall sense of happiness. Of course, all exercise releases endorphins, but dancing has an increased effect because it's not only the physical activity, but also the music, that affect the mind. Think of the happiest moments in your life and then make your own personal playlist of songs that remind you of those times. Now that you have your playlist, don't be shy or over think it, simply shake it! The crazier the better!! I recommend doing this out in public, sure people will laugh... But as the saying goes "laughter is contagious"

Laughter is the best medicine. Humor and laughter are like a mood changing magical pill with no prescription required. Laughing not only relaxes the body and boosts your immune system, but it also stimulates endorphins, your body's "feel good" chemicals. How can we get our daily laughs? I'll spare you my corny jokes "LOL" Simple: watch a comedy movie, or even better, go out to a local comedy club! Surround yourself with people who tell great stories and make you laugh. or watch ridiculous youtube clips. I highly recommend anything Justin Timberlake appears in. I dare you to watch and not laugh... Let your laughter be contagious, I promise you'll feel better.

Ahh... there's nothing like preparing a warm meal on a cold day. The amount of time Canadians spend cooking has almost halved since 1993, according to consumer analysts, during the same period, the number of stress-connected illnesses has doubled, with cooking being on the long list of activities we're too busy to do. Maybe the lack of fresh produce has left you feeling uninspired? Whatever your reason, finding the motivation to cook when everything is cold and grey can be difficult. Comfort food is called that for a reason. When we eat comfort food, we tap into good memories, conjuring up past birthday celebrations by eating chocolate cake or our mom's Sunday dinners by making her lasagna or roast beef and yorkshire pudding. You'd be surprised how many recipes for healthy versions of the traditional favourites can be found online. Why not double the recipe and you'll have leftovers for the week, or better yet you can surprise a friend by dropping dinner off.



Rather than hibernating this winter, experience some of what the season has to offer. February is the month of winter festivals and every weekend seems to be full of outdoor activities. With several parks throughout southern Ontario with over 450 kilometers of hiking, snowshoe and cross country ski trails, why not get out and enjoy. Many of these parks have warm-up shelters and/or cabins with wood fires and hot chocolate to warm you up. Staying active will boost your energy. Seeing winter in a positive light, with all the fun activities it has to offer, will keep your spirits high.

Having something to look forward to can keep anyone positive and motivated. When Winter seems endless plan something exciting to look forward to. Your mood will improve with the excitement and anticipation. Plan something that is exciting to you, a weekend ski trip, a day at the spa, a night out at a sporting event, a "beat the February blues party" or a girls movie night in. Spending a little time doing what you love with those you love will be sure to lift your spirits and brighten your mood.

I'm a crazed lover of quotes and inspirational words. Almost annoyingly addicted to them. I've finally discovered the joy of Pinterest. Pinterest is a mecca for inspirational words and pictures that makes me smile. Create a "Happiness Board" and start pinning. After all its pretty hard to feel bummed when you are surrounded by inspirational quotes, flowers, butterflies and puppies.

Winter may bring shorter days and colder temps. but it also offers many chances to put on your favourite tunes and shake it, snuggle up and get though your movie list, get outside and enjoy, and partake in some heartwarming cuisine. Make the best of what's left of the season. Stay positive. Spring will be here before we know it.