

5 Simple Ways to Beat the Winter Blahs



"Laughter is the sun that drives winter from the human face." -- Victor Hugo

In nature, winter is a time of rest and regeneration. Trees and plants lie dormant, and many people use the quiet time to relax and regroup. They reflect on their goals, spend time with close friends, and pursue favorite hobbies.

With its short days and long chilly nights, the quiet beauty of winter also has a darker side.

Routines that feel comfortable and familiar in the summer months can become ho-hum and monotonous when winter's darkness fills the days more than sunshine.

The human body is hard-wired to sync with daylight and our natural energy waxes with the morning sun and wanes as night falls. It's difficult to maintain that energy when we spend our limited

daylight hours indoors, in front of a computer.

If it feels like your days are one long slog of getting up, going to work, and sitting on the couch, we have five simple ways to beat the winter blahs.

1. Smile (even if you're alone)

Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh is quoted as saying, smiling relaxes every bone in your body. According to [SCL Health](#), this is because the act of smiling causes your body to release neuropeptides, neurotransmitters, and endorphins that help to ease stress, pain, and depression. It's not the panacea, but at the very least, knowing you're sitting there grinning by yourself

may be enough to elicit a fit of giggles.

2. Exercise (sorry couch potatoes)

Any movement that forces you out of your seat and gets your heart pumping will send a boost of endorphins that will lighten your mood. Even better, regular exercise can improve your overall health and increase your energy.

You don't have to commit to a rigid routine.

A 15-minute walk a few times a week can do wonders. If you hate the treadmill or can't imagine dragging yourself out through the snow to go to the gym, there are online platforms that let you sample different activities

"One kind word can warm three winter months." -- Japanese Proverb

like HIIT class, spin, or even Dancing to the Oldies. As long as it involves some kind of movement, it counts.

3. Connect with people*

Wintry gray days that drag into long nights make the idea of staying home and binge-watching your favorite TV show appealing, but after two years of COVID-19 restrictions, it can feel isolating. As much

as we all appreciate how technology helps us stay connected, it is no replacement for in-person contact. If you're cautious about getting together with a large group, think about grabbing a coffee with someone you haven't seen in a while and enjoy a socially distanced conversation.

4. Scale back

Whether you're still working from home or are back at the office, blurry

boundaries and always-on technology can lead to feelings of overwhelm and isolation.

If you've transitioned permanently to remote work, think about using the time you used to spend on your commute to relax or spend time with your family.

If you live alone, take your dog for an extra-long walk, meditate, or do something for yourself.

Don't forget your commute happened twice a day. That means you have twice the opportunity to carve out time to do something besides work.

If you're back in the office, don't fall into the trap of going in early, working through lunch, and staying late.

Fitting in one more task won't push a project to the



next level, but taking regular breaks away from your desk and leaving the office behind when you go home will do wonders for your energy and morale. -- You may even catch a rare glimpse of sunlight sparkling and dancing across the snow.

5. Try something new

Trying new things is a fantastic way to break out of a tired routine. Take a class, rediscover a favorite hobby, or learn a new skill. Websites like futurelearn.com, hobbifun.com, and atlasobscura.com are great places to find ideas.

Many towns also offer community education where you can learn everything from a foreign language to ballroom dancing, Reiki, or cooking.

Summary

Each of these activities can help you boost your energy and improve your mood because they force you to break free from your routine.

That's the key.

The winter blahs are all about falling into routines that isolate you from the people and activities you enjoy.

You can't control the daylight or the weather, but you can choose to

carve out some me-time, catch up with friends, cheer yourself on, celebrate small wins, or be more active. All it takes is a conscious choice, followed by deliberate action.

*We know that meeting new people and making friends can be a challenge for adults. If you want to hang out with people who aren't your co-workers, check out meetup.com or eventbrite.com to find virtual and in-person groups and events where you can connect with people who share your interests. ✓

Seasonal blahs are not the same as seasonal affective disorder.

Seasonal affective disorder is a clinical diagnosis of depression that happens during a specific time of year and lasts for two or more weeks.

If you or someone you know is thinking about hurting themselves, please call the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or text the Crisis Text Line (HELLO to 741741)