

“A positive mindset brings positive things.”
– Philipp Reiter

I thought this was a great quote to kick off my topic this month. It's so easy to focus on the negative, which can bring you down emotionally. Then you go into a downward spiral that can lead to the winter blues. Once you're there, in that dark place, it's often tough to break out and you end up spiraling into a deeper and darker place. But if you simply change your mindset and focus on the positive things in life, good things will start to happen. Remember, each 24-hour day contains 1,440 minutes. That gives you 1,440 opportunities every single day to make a positive impact. Think about all the good you could do, which could help bring someone (including yourself) out of the winter blues. Additionally, when you change your thoughts, it's the first step toward changing your world. It really is all about your own mindset. There's an old saying that *“You can complain because rose bushes have thorns or you can rejoice because thorn bushes have roses.”* The CHOICE is yours and yours alone. As you enter the new year that's hopefully filled with new promises and dreams, CHOOSE to be positive. Believing in negative thoughts is the single biggest obstacle to success and happiness. Hopefully, my suggestions below will help, but if you need something more, please reach out.

Yours in health,
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How to Beat the Winter Blues



Winter blues. We've all had them and they're not fun. Some people know them by their more medical name, Seasonal Affective Disorder (“SAD”). For those of you who have never experienced the winter blues, it's basically a form of depression that's seasonal in nature and begins in the late fall and can last until early spring. It seems to be caused by a lack of sunlight, with the days getting shorter and colder. This change can cause many people to feel sad and lethargic and may impact sleep and appetite. It likely makes you want to just be alone.

But the reality is that SAD is often more than just “winter blues.” Some people experience symptoms so intense, it interferes with daily life. SAD has been linked to a biochemical imbalance in the brain caused by less sunlight. Common symptoms include the following:

- Feelings of sadness or depression.
- Marked loss of interest in activities that typically bring joy.
- Increase in appetite and a desire for carbs.
- Change in typical sleep patterns.
- Loss of energy and increased fatigue.
- Feelings of worthlessness.
- Difficulty making decisions and concentrating.
- In extreme cases, it can lead to suicidal thoughts.

SAD can be effectively treated several ways, including light therapy, antidepressants, counseling or some combination of these. As I'm sure you can imagine, I'm not a fan of medication, as I would rather find ways to naturally feel better. But in some severe cases, it may be needed. The good news is that symptoms will typically improve as the days get longer and warmer. But there are also several things you can do to help prevent yourself from falling victim to this disorder.

1. **Exercise daily** – This is the most important thing you can do for yourself. You should try to get at least 20 minutes per day of activity. It can be something as simple as going for a walk on your lunch break. The important thing is that you get out of your chair and move. Not only will it improve your mood, but it will also increase your overall energy. Make sure to Smile! It can lift your mood as well as the mood of those around you.
2. **Be Peaceful** – Take time every day to disconnect from the rat race of life. Meditation and prayer are good options for this. In previous newsletters, I've written about keeping a gratitude journal. It's easy to dwell on the negative parts of the day and even of your life that just aren't perfect. That's why it's so important to disconnect and make note of things for which you're grateful and bring you peace.
3. **Reach out to Friends** – When you're in a dark place, it's easy to do what I like to call "hermitize" yourself. That's the worst thing you can do. Reach out to friends to keep yourself from feeling isolated. Make a phone call, send a text, or set up a video chat. Contacting other people can help boost your spirits as well as theirs.
4. **Use Your Mind** – Activating your brain by doing things like solving crossword puzzles, reading a book, or working on a paint-by-numbers picture can get the intellectual juices flowing. When you're focused on other things, it helps you forget that you might not be feeling your best. This will help keep you from dwelling on things that make you feel down.
5. **Get out in Nature**– Get out of your house and venture outside! Even if it's only for a few minutes, the fresh air (even if it's cold) and sunshine can help you feel refreshed. Vitamin D, which is best provided by the sun, is instrumental in helping to keep you healthy. A deficiency in this important nutrient is the common denominator in most illness.

Take time to Relax – We live in a rat race, where we're expected to "go, go, go!" At some point you have to take a step back from all that to manage the stress it causes. Do something that relaxes you, like having a glass of wine on your deck, listening to your favorite music, reading a book, taking a bath or meeting a friend for dinner. It will do you a world of good to temporarily "check out" of the craziness.

For those of you who watch the news, you know it's mostly negative. In these times of constant negative messaging, you truly have to look really hard to find the positive. The best thing you can do for yourself is turn off the news. Most of it's fake anyway. Instead, engage in activities that are positive, stress-reducing and laughter-inducing. It'll go a long way in terms of improving your mental health and outlook on life.

These simple actions can help you stay positive:

- Remember that things won't be this way forever.
- Remind yourself of all the good things in your life.
- Watch a funny movie or do something else that makes you laugh. Laughter truly is one of the best medicines.
- Practice random acts of kindness.

Keep in mind that if you do something unexpected for someone else, it will not only make his or her day, but it will ultimately make yours much better. Focus on someone else rather than yourself and see how much better you feel. Never forget that every day may not be good, but there truly is something good in every single day. Some days you just have to look a little harder to find it.

Have a wonderful month!