



Seasonal Affective Disorder & Winter Doldrums

by award-winning author / stress-relief expert Susie Mantell

Help for Stress & Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD):

Many experience clinical winter blues known as Season Affective Disorder that can be related to fewer hours of available daylight in winter. If you suspect you may be one of them, talk with a trusted healthcare professional for support. In addition, during a hectic winter holiday season, at the end of the day most of us find attention to personal needs somewhere at the bottom of our To-Do List. If you find yourself feeling low, try the following tips for diminishing the stress of Seasonal Affective Disorder:

1. There are natural light bulbs and scheduling suggestions for their timing, that can provide the effect of daylight that lifts spirits. Some nutritional supplements may help you through a slump. As always, get professional advice on dosage, risks, any contraindications, etc.
2. Make time for recreation. Get outdoors each day. Moderate exercise and replenishing sleep help to support health, and replenish a weary body.
3. See friends. Organize a girls (or guys) night-out. Even a few minutes with someone you really like is a great stress-buster. Schedule quick tea dates. Invite friends and order-in. Use elegant paper plates. Rent a movie, play a board game. Have everybody bring a wrapped grab-bag gift under \$10. Make one new friend this winter.
4. Stay hydrated. We're not as naturally thirsty in winter as we are in as in summer when we perspire more, so we tend to choose hot beverages, which are harder to drink in quantity. Get in 6-8 glasses of water to flush toxins, hydrate skin and aid digestion. Dehydration can cause many problems, "the blues" among them.
5. Eat healthily and exercise regularly. When you do splurge on a holiday treat, enjoy every bite. Watch sugar, caffeine and alcohol consumption. Winter leads many into "Sugar Blues," often confused with clinical depression ...or another common winter ailment known as "crabbiness."
6. Reducing caffeine, sugar and alcohol just may help. Too much of these can make us irritable and distractible. (See the tip on my website about sugar and stress and many other helpful techniques at www.relaxintuit.com)
7. After a long day, luxuriate in hot, "non-working" baths. Soothing music, relaxation CD and mini-meditations all provide effortless comfort and lift our spirits.

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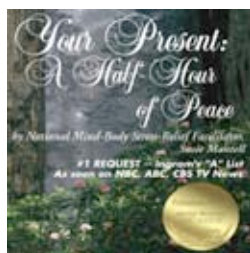
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8. Overwhelmed? Simplify & Prioritize. How could you simplify (or eliminate) just one task? Who could help?
9. Take healthy breaks. Do something you love every day. Schedule naps, time to read, swim. Read something that makes you think, feel or grow every day.
10. Do something kind--just "because." (*feed an expired meter, let someone go first at the market. Thank six people daily, e.g. the mailman, a first responder, a teacher.*)
11. Are you missing a far-away friend or loved one? Schedule an uninterrupted phone date to catch up.
12. Close your eyes, and imagine you are smiling. Then open your eyes, and stay that way all day, kind of half-smiling. This sends a mind-body signal: *"I must be happy. I'm smiling."* Now see how many people you can get to smile back. Rushing along windy streets, bundled up, head down, we often forget to look others in the eye and connect. Smiling actually releases endorphins, yours and theirs. Go ahead and smile. Then, move on and "accomplish." The day you save could be your own!

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