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Beat the *wintertime* Blues & Blahs

13 Ways to Nourish Your Spirit

There are 13 weeks of winter.

Here are 13 ways to enjoy them.

By
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Hines

Winter got you down? You're not alone. With the lighthearted holidays behind us and a stretch of cold, dark days ahead, this time of year can be rough, especially for women. Banish winter yuck with a few of these nourishing self-care tips.

Rest. (1)

With flu, colds, and various other ailments running crazy through many households this time of the year, taking time to rest can help protect your health. Treat yourself to a catnap, early bedtime, or simply rest with your eyes closed for 15 minutes.

► WHERE TO START

Are worries keeping you awake? Write them down in a worry journal, along with three things you're thankful for that day. Spray lavender essential oil mixed with water on your pillow. Then, lights out.



Seek deeper.....(2) conversation.

Remember how good you feel after you've spent time laughing or discussing meaningful topics with close friends? Good conversation that goes deeper than small talk helps us feel a strong sense of connection with others. And, it's good for you. Time with friends helps boost our immune systems and decreases our stress levels.

► WHERE TO START

Contact a friend today and schedule a time to get together. Even an hour will make a significant difference in your outlook.



Collect the(3) good stuff.

File away feel-good comments people share with you and read them when you're down. Make a Pinterest board with items that raise your spirits, like inspiring quotes, beautiful gardens, or comforting recipes.

► WHERE TO START

Create a Joy Jar. Include notes from friends, photos that lift your spirits, enlightening quotes, small trinkets, funny quips from your kids, or daily gratitudes.



Make lists.(4)

Take a break from to-do lists, which can serve to overwhelm a tired, tender spirit. Instead, make lists that answer questions like: *Wouldn't it be amazing if...? What are my dreams? What do I need less of in order to focus on the more important things in life? What am I grateful for? What did I notice today?*

► WHERE TO START

Decorate a special notebook just for your dream lists.



Disconnect.(5)

Just as you can catch feelings of sadness, anger, and happiness from people you interact with face-to-face, your mood is also influenced by emotionally charged posts on social media, according to a study published in the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. Notice if you feel bummed or drained after spending time on social media. Curate your feed by unfollowing consistently negative individuals or groups, disable constant notifications, and be aware of the types of posts you click on and share.

► WHERE TO START

Take weekly social media breaks and establish daily time limits to regain control. Make it harder to mindlessly open up social media throughout the day by logging out every time you use it. That forces you to have to enter your username and password whenever you want to open it again.

LOG IN

* * * * *



Give. (6)

Big or small, doing something kind for someone is uplifting times two! Surprise an acquaintance with a thoughtful note, mail a funny card to a friend, or post a positive review for a local business. Volunteer an hour of your time for an organization that you admire or deliver a dessert to a new neighbor.

► WHERE TO START

Don't put it off—decide something you can do today to pass along some kindness to someone else.

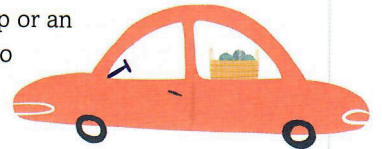


Get away. (7)

If possible, escape winter by traveling to a warm, sunny spot for a few days. Can't leave on a trip? Find ways to get a change of scenery close to home by visiting a bookstore, café, or museum that you've never explored before. Getting out of the house and going to a new place can buoy low spirits.

► WHERE TO START

Schedule a day trip or an overnight retreat to somewhere you can recharge.



Feel sad during the winter?

It might be seasonal affective disorder (SAD).

SAD affects

10 million
Americans.

SAD is

4X more
common among women.

Symptoms include

- feelings of hopelessness
- sadness
- weight gain
- sleepiness
- low energy
- withdrawal from social situations

NOTE: Depression and anxiety are serious health conditions. Please consult your physician if you continue to struggle.

Read. (8)

From inspiring memoirs to humorous essays, curl up with a book and a warm beverage. Share your love of reading by starting a book club with other enthusiastic bibliophiles.

► WHERE TO START

Follow your favorite authors online for quick hits of inspiration.

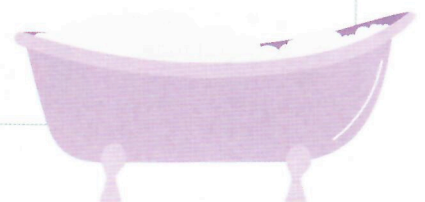


Relax. (9)

Are you someone who, like me, has trouble warming up on a cold day? On days like that, my go-to is a warm, soothing bath. Candles and lavender Epsom salts are inexpensive ways to make bath time even more special.

► WHERE TO START

Schedule some time for relaxation, whether it's a hot bath, a massage, or a pedicure.



Exercise. (10)

If weather permits, bundle up and take a walk. The fresh air, the bright light of the sun on your face, and time spent in nature can effectively lift an otherwise damp mood. If you can't get outside, any kind of regular exercise can boost the feel-good endorphins in your body. Ask a friend to join you for additional motivation.

► WHERE TO START

Want more energy to stay active? Feed your body well. Choose colorful berries, winter vegetables, and comforting soups to give you the nourishment and energy you need to stay active.



Play. (11)

We aren't designed to work, work, work all of the time. Even animals play! Play with paint, build a snowman, or try an art project just for fun.

► WHERE TO START

If you don't feel as playful when you're alone, involve others in your recreation. Schedule a game night with friends or goof off outside with your family.



Don't wait (12) for spring-cleaning.

Feeling stuck and bogged down? Begin decluttering your home, and you'll immediately feel lighter. Start with things that are broken, damaged, no longer fit, or no longer bring you joy.

► WHERE TO START

Grab a bag or box and go around your house, picking up something from each room that you are ready to give away or discard.

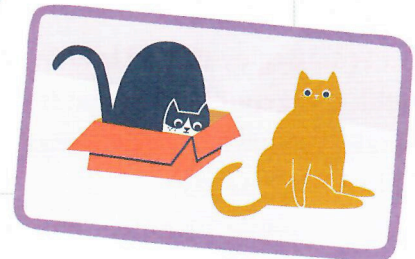


Laugh. (13)

With all the chatter, vitriolic opinions, depressing news, and chaos in the world right now, it's easy to get mired in everything that isn't going right. Sharing happy videos and memes on social media, spending time with friends who make you laugh, and watching laugh-out-loud sitcoms help.

► WHERE TO START

Take a quick break to watch something funny or call or text an upbeat friend. *vi*



Christa M. Hines is a nationally published freelance writer. She believes nourishing self-care is key to wintertime sanity.