

# Battling the winter blues

For some people, winter means twinkling lights, snowflakes, family gatherings and winter sports. For others, winter can be a test of endurance, each day a battle to find motivation and energy. These folks may be experiencing seasonal affective disorder. Often referred to as SAD, this condition rears its ugly head when the days grow short and the nights grow cold.

When researchers at The Weather Channel and YouGov sought to re-research seasonal affective disorder in the United Kingdom, they expected to see similar results from previous studies. However, what they found was striking. One in three people living in the UK seemed to be suffering from some degree of SAD. More than 50% of the population reported their overall mood as worse during the winter months. This was a very different story from the average 7% to 8% often reported in other studies. Seasonal affective disorder is far more common than expected and chances are, you or someone you know is affected.

Here are some simple suggestions for keeping your spirits up.



**1 Light it up.** Sunlight can have a positive effect on mood. Take a walk during the daylight hours. If you can't get outside, or the rain has hidden the sun, consider getting a light box or full spectrum light bulbs.

**2 You got to move it, move it.** Join an exercise class, dance or walk the dog – it doesn't matter what you do, just move. Getting your heart rate up increases circulation, invigorates the mind and releases endorphins – all things that make us feel good.

**3 Spend time with friends.** Planning something with friends gives you something to look forward to and can help lift the spirits. Do something just for fun.

**4 Consider aromatherapy.** Essential oils have a direct connection with the limbic brain, which manages our memories and emotions. There are some fantastic oils to help with mood from lavender for calming, vetiver for focus, peppermint for invigoration, and wild orange for positivity.

**5 Talk to your GP.** There is no shame in talking with a professional. We can all do our part to remove the stigma around our mental and emotional health by asking for help when we need it.



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