

Dodging the Winter Blues

Have you ever noticed how in winter we seem to lose some of our drive. In spring we come alive at the prospect of sun and fresh air. We have so many plans and are full of hope. A new start. Summer arrives and we seem to have more time to do things. We feel more energised, ready to face the world. We even get motivated to look after our physical bodies and try to get fit. As the day dawn's new hope awakens. Inspiration waits for us.

In winter, we seem to lose momentum. We become lethargic as our energy levels drop. Like a bear, all we want to do is hibernate. We feel tired and we seem to lose our inspiration. That drive that seems to keep us going through the summer months dissipates with time during the winter months.

Have you ever noticed how our energy levels drop after a few constant days of rain and dark skies? We tend to lose our smile and our sense of humour. All we want is to stay at home and hide from the world, eat comfort food and do nothing. We become easily agitated as we allow things that would ordinarily seem trivial to affect us.

Winter would be perfect if we didn't have to get up to cold, wet, dark mornings, work all day and only get home as the sun is setting, to face even more work. For many of us getting home is just the start of another shift. Cooking, cleaning, looking after the children; your partner.

Most people do not even enjoy their workplace yet it's where they spend most of their time. It's a place where there is constant pressure to perform, office politics, and often, the unrealistic expectations we put upon ourselves.

When our energy levels drop, so do our immune systems. We start to feel depleted. We get lost in our heads. The mind chatter becomes constant and dissolves all sense of clarity. Our emotions start to surface more intensely. The thoughts that are based on emotions take hold to the point that we lose sight of the bigger picture or any sense of logic.

However, the world is what you think it is. Thoughts turn into words which turn into action.

Imagine that your brain is a computer and that the virus is the negative thought pattern in your mind. When you continue to only think of negative thoughts, ideas and experiences, then with time, they start to manifest in your reality. This seems to intensify in winter with the decrease in sunlight, and colder temperatures. It is easier to get lost in our thoughts and allow a distorted reality to take shape. We forget that each experience is merely a lesson that we need to learn. Instead we get caught up in the emotions and lose sight of the lesson. We despair as we fall deeper and deeper into the victim mentality.

An example of this is a client I once had. Everything in her life was wrong and of course it was everyone and everything else's fault. All she spoke about was doom and gloom, There was not one positive thing that came out of her mouth to the point where she could no longer remember one happy moment in her life. At the age of 32 you would think that there would be at least one happy moment, one good laugh, one joke. It reached the point where she even found it hard to see colours. She had imprisoned herself in her own mind. She was unable to work and relied on anti-depression drugs to get her through the day. This was an

attractive, intelligent woman who only two years earlier was a successful lawyer. Sadly she was unable to see her beauty. She had become so critical and full of judgements.

So why do we allow this to happen?

We don't take into consideration the climate changes which naturally affect our physical and mental bodies. We stop listening to our bodies and continue to push ourselves to the max until these emotions turn into a physical ailment for us to address. Typically we ignore our pain or try to suppress it. This then manifests into a more serious problem. We still keep ignoring our bodies, refusing to nurture ourselves and continue to push hard until we reach breaking point.

A more common example of this is when we start to feel run down, but we still try to maintain the same level of intensity as we do in summer. We do not take into consideration the fundamental changes in the weather patterns when we already understand that without enough sunlight on our skin (vitamin D) we can easily fall into a state of depression. With the colder months our body gets tired and sends signals for us to rest. When ignored, these signals can easily turn into flu symptoms. Continuing to ignore these signals will then often lead to a more serious infection which takes longer for us to recover from. We start to feel vulnerable as fear takes hold.

In summer it is easier to maintain balance and be able to deal with all this. There is the flow of the sun's rays to energise us and keep us in a more positive state of being. We swim in the ocean which helps to cleanse and energise our bodies. We walk bare footed on the land which helps to ground our energy and we are more likely to try our hand at keeping fit.

As winter approaches we tend to stay indoors more. Our energy levels drop because we have not found an alternative to compensate us for the loss of sunshine and fresh, outdoor air. We are less social and we tend to feel uninspired.

Have you ever noticed that as soon as the clouds clear and the sun comes out we automatically start to feel more at peace. It's as if you can breathe again for the first time. That incredible feeling when the sun first touches your skin, that gentle warmth. Our moods automatically change once the sun comes out.

We feel lighter, calmer, a fog lifted for that brief moment. The secret is to harness that feeling whenever your body needs it. Not to just sit around and become a victim.

It is important that in winter we listen to our bodies more and try to make the most of the good weather. Enjoy the moment and allow the mind to become still. Take deep breaths now and then and allow yourself to centre. Don't you find that it is so much easier to look after other people than to nurture ourselves. We always come last, yet if you can't look after you then who will? Our bodies actually tell us what they need but we ignore them. Science tells us that without sunlight we will cease to function. One of the key factors in treating MS is vitamin D - sunlight.

Prevention is better than cure. Following are some tools that you can utilise in order to prevent the winter blues. They are natural and effective and the only thing it costs is a little of your time.

Remember; energy flows where attention goes so each time you catch yourself thinking of a negative thought or experience, replace it with a positive thought, feeling or experience immediately. You can visualise the thought or feeling on a canvas. See yourself painting over it with a golden paint and then replace that thought or emotion with a positive thought, emotion or memory. Breathe deep that feeling of freedom, exhilaration, joy and peace. See yourself happy and sooner or later you will start to believe it and thus create it. If, like my client, you find it difficult, then think of the best sex you ever had. I bet you're smiling right now at the thought. Laughter is the greatest medicine.

There are many tools you can utilise to assist you in dealing with depression. It's important that you find what resonates for you. There is no right way or wrong way, it is your journey and you must find your truth, what works for you.

Some tools you can use to clear your mind and get the energy flowing are meditation, chi gong, yoga, tai chi, healing treatments and massage to name a few. If anger is an issue, it must also be released physically, so roll the windows up in your car and scream your lungs out, run, surf, ride your bike, whatever works. For me, boxing works the best. I tried punching pillows and found it most frustrating - but hey, it might work for you! In this way, you will not be taking out your frustrations on others.

A good, quick meditation before you start the day is:

- Close your eyes.
- Take deep, gentle breaths – visualising a golden yellow ray, like the midday sun coming down from creator (whatever creator is to you). Now if you can't visualise it just put the intent.
- Breathe this colour gently down through the top of the head, down into the Pituitary Gland, located in the middle of the head below the centre of the brain.
- Do not force the breath.
- Feel the stomach expand outwards as you breathe in.
- As you breathe, close your eyes.
- Breathe out slowly and gently. Visualise the golden yellow colour touching every cell of your being. Stomach goes in as your breath out.
- Imagine this colour flooding your whole body. Your muscles, bones, organs, skin, hair etc
- **Do this X 21 breaths**

- When completed, continue to take slow breaths and start to wiggle your toes slowly, then your fingers, moving up to the shoulders, neck and head.
- When you are ready, slowly open your eyes.
- You can do the 21 breath meditation in bed ideal before going to sleep as it will help still the mind for a better sleep.
- To **ground your energy** (so you're not so caught up in the head) breathe into the stomach and as you breathe out, gently release the energy down through the legs and out through the feet.
- Visualise or sense golden roots forming out of your feet, going vertically down through to the core of the earth. Rapping around it.
- Do this several times as it will help to ground your energy.
- This is a simple and effective tool to use each time you are feeling overwhelmed. It's ideal to do before you have to confront someone, go into a meeting, or anytime you are feeling lost in your head and in need of some clarity.

It's important to realise that you **do** have the ability to stop the mind chatter that takes over at times, just as easily as you created it. You have a choice and it is your responsibility to make peace within your world. The happiness and joy you seek can only come from within. By nurturing ourselves, we are able to create a constant flow of energy in our bodies, which makes the flow of life much smoother. Regardless of seasons, when you use these techniques you are able to balance your emotions with much greater ease. Just try it, you have nothing to lose and everything to gain. Remember you have the ability to create your reality. You always have a choice.

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