Dealing with the winter blues

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The shorter days and longer nights of winter leave many of us feeling grumpy, lethargic and out of sorts. As the clocks go back and the weather becomes increasingly grey and chilly it can have a negative effect on our mood, leaving many of us wishing we could hunker down inside and hibernate until spring.

There is a scientific explanation behind these feelings, with the lack of daylight in particular thought to be a major factor behind the low moods which are felt by so many of us in the winter months. Thankfully, there are some simple, practical steps we can all take to keep our wellbeing on track during this time.

Dr Sherylin Thompson, a Registered Member of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, gives the following advice:

> "**Exercise regularly**. It is easy to use the temperamental weather and limited daylight as an excuse to miss out on our recommended 30 minutes of exercise a day. However, staying fit is an excellent way to reduce stress levels and improve your mood. If bad weather precludes outdoor activity, there are still plenty of ways you can keep active indoors, such as by joining a local gym or following a yoga DVD at home.
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> "**Maintain a healthy diet**. Many of us turn to stodgy 'comfort' foods as the weather gets colder. While there's nothing wrong with treating yourself occasionally (in fact it's to be encouraged!) try in general to keep to a diet rich in fruit and veg and low in fat and sugar. Eating healthily and taking care of your diet will give you more energy as well as making you less susceptible to the colds and viruses which are so prevalent at this time of year.
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> "**Stay active socially**. Making an effort to keep in touch with your friends and keep up with social activities you enjoy will do wonders for your wellbeing. Resist the temptation to tuck yourself away at home and get out and about instead. This is a great time of year to try something new – look at the short courses available in your area and take the opportunity to learn a new skill – you may well make new friends at the same time.
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> "**Talk about it**. If you're feeling down and the rubbish weather and dark nights are getting to you, don't keep it all to yourself. Open up to friends, colleagues, your family or your partner. Tell someone how you are feeling and you may be surprised at the positive effect that this can have on your outlook.
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> "**Seek professional help**. For some of us, the onset of winter can have a dramatic negative effect on our wellbeing, perhaps even leading to a form of depression called Seasonal Affective Disorder. Therapy has been shown to improve the symptoms of people with depression - it can help you become more emotionally resilient and therefore better able to cope with things."

Therapy offers you a safe, confidential place to talk with someone who is trained to listen attentively and to help you improve things. You can access therapy through your GP for free. You may also be able to access therapy through your workplace or, if you are in education, through your school, college or university.

If you decide to access counselling privately, BACP's public website www.itsgoodtotalk.org.uk contains a wealth of information for anyone considering therapy including information sheets, videos, links to recent research, and a 'find a therapist' directory which helps you to find a private therapist in your local area.

Notes to editors

Dr Sherylin Thompson is available for follow-up comment. For any enquiries related to this press release, call our media team on 01455 883 342, or email media@bacp.co.uk. For non-media enquiries please call our main switchboard on 01455 883 300.

BACP is a professional body and a registered charity that sets standards for therapeutic practice and provides information for therapists, clients of therapy, and the public. We have over 40,000 members, working within a range of settings, including the NHS, schools and universities, workplaces and private practice, as well as third sector environments including voluntary, community and pastoral settings

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