

Banish the winter blues with these expert tips

Winter has well and truly arrived – and with the shorter days can come a lower mood. Brain fitness specialist Dr Jenny Brockis (drjennybrockis.com) says Seasonal Affective Disorder (or SAD) is a form of depression that can occur over the winter months.

‘Some people experience the winter blues, which is a milder version of the malaise, linked to shorter days and less sunlight,’ she says.

‘The symptoms are those associated with depression, such as low mood, irritability, anxiety but also a disturbed sleep pattern – sleeping longer and finding it difficult to get out of bed in the morning.’ Here are some simple ways to keep upbeat...

LIGHT BOX THERAPY

Dr Brockis explains that prolonged periods of darkness impact our circadian rhythm

and influence mood, hence the desire to hibernate and sleep longer. Light boxes that emit a cool white light have been used as an effective treatment for SAD.

‘Typically, a person will sit in front of the light box for 30 to 60 minutes each morning to help boost mood,’ says Dr Brockis. ‘Alarm clocks with an inbuilt dawn simulator have been shown to be helpful.’

Dr Brockis warns that it’s important to get medical advice as to which device is most appropriate to your situation.

‘Not all light boxes are the same,’ she says.

EXERCISE OUTDOORS

According to nutritionist Angela Emmerton (nutritionalmatters.com.au), making sure you step outdoors during daylight hours to ‘inhale’ some sunshine will increase vitamin D and boost serotonin levels, as well as help you sleep better.

‘Regular exercise will increase serotonin, and research confirms that regular exercise can have antidepressant effects,’ says Angela, who recommends downloading an app on your phone such as Pacer to track ‘time on



feet’, which may help with motivation.

DRINK MILK

Angela advises that consuming foods that are high in tryptophan, including milk, can help elevate your mood.

‘It’s also found in chicken, eggs, turkey, cheese, salmon, tofu, nuts and seeds which can boost serotonin levels in your brain, believed to act as a mood stabiliser,’ she explains.

SPEAK TO A PROFESSIONAL

Dr Brockis says cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) can help treat SAD.

‘Learning how to reframe negative thoughts has been shown to help reduce the occurrence and development of negative thought patterns,’ she says.

‘This is shifting a response of: “Oh no, it’s winter, and I’m going to feel bad” towards identifying some of the positives that winter can bring, like snuggling up in



NEW
Stress-free

Identify the positive aspects of winter – like snuggling up with a good book!

front of a warm fire, spending time with friends and engaging in different activities.’

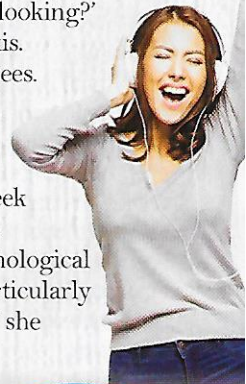
DANCE TO THE MUSIC

Listening to your favourite tunes can make a difference to your mood – and it’s even better if it’s music that makes you want to dance.

‘Why not listen to some music that gets your foot tapping and an urge to dance like no-one is looking?’ says Dr Brockis.

Angela agrees.

‘Music therapy for one or two hours each week can enhance a person’s psychological wellbeing, particularly in the elderly,’ she explains.



If you suspect you may have SAD, it’s important to speak to your GP because any form of depression is potentially serious and may warrant specific treatment.

SAD-proof YOUR WINTER

