

# Key to Beating the Winter Blues

Tis the season to be jolly... or is it?

As the days grow darker and the Christmas lights are exiled to the forgotten corners of the closet, you may catch yourself feeling a little down.

Approximately 2 million people in the UK experience a notable dip in their mood over the winter months. The exact cause of these “winter blues” has yet to be confirmed, though most research suggests a link between lower sunlight hours and mood hormones.

According to NHS inform, winter blues can manifest as any combination of the following symptoms:

- Depression
- Sleep problems
- Lethargy
- Overeating
- Irritability
- Feeling down and unsociable

If your symptoms worsen or are getting in the way of your normal functioning, you may have developed a severe form of depression known as seasonal affective disorder (SAD). If you feel this is the case, please reach out to a support service.

All of us here at **Reshape HR** encourage you to put your health and wellbeing above all other things. As such, we’ve come up with an easy to remember self-help key designed to help you keep out the winter blues!

What’s the first step, you might ask? Well, to begin with, you’ll need to drop the ‘blues’ and think only of **W.I.N.T.E.R.**

# Winter Outlook

As your relatives start winding down their Christmas decorations, you may find yourself struck by the grim reminder of winter's approach. Snowy winds, soggy boots, and slippery roads. These are just a few of the many things NOT to look forward to.

Now, banish those thoughts! Take all that negativity, all those bad memories and associations you have of winter, then set it down somewhere obscure. Once you've done that, simply turn around and don't look back.

Teach yourself to stop thinking about what's *wrong* with winter. Start thinking about what's *right* with it instead.

You know your tastes better than anyone else. No matter how big or small, unorthodox or clichéd, find what you love about winter and keep it close to your heart.

Here's a few of our little joys to help you get started:

- Hot drinks
- Winter sales
- Playing in the snow
- The winter scenery
- Ugly Christmas jumpers

# Illumination

As a condition linked to the lack of sunlight, it isn't really surprising to find the winter blues being more common the further north or south from the equator you are. Unfortunately for us in the UK, we're a fair distance away from the red line that splits our planet in two (at least in our atlases).

The winter skies are dark and the days don't last long. Everything's dimmer and perhaps a little dreary, but you should never forget that there's still a sun in the sky.

So, open up your blinds and draw the curtains! Sip that hot cocoa as you take that early morning walk! Maximise your time in the sunlight this winter, even if it isn't as warm or as radiant as you'd prefer it to be.

# Nutrition

When you're feeling down, it is very common for us to turn to our comfort foods for, well... comfort.

But while chowing down on carbohydrates and sugar-loaded treats can feel great in the moment, you may just find yourself feeling more sluggish and unfulfilled than when you started. Your cravings may worsen as a result, further leading to overeating.

This winter, make the effort to maintain a balanced diet. It will do wonders for your health and happiness. Eat lots of fruit, vegetables, and protein. You might feel as if your options are limited in winter, but that's not entirely true. Be adventurous, expand your palate. Try out that exotic yam you decided against last year.

# Time For Yourself

The world is a complicated and frustrating place, so much so that it isn't uncommon to feel overwhelmed by the stresses of daily life. For many of us, the winter season can serve as a catalyst for mental burnouts and shattered morale. So how do we combat this?

- Pursue your hobbies
- Play that funky music
- Put your body and mind to rest as you sit by the fireplace
- Avoid falling into the trap of thinking investing in yourself needs to be earned.

Winter blues or not, setting aside time for yourself is essential to maintaining your wellbeing. By getting into the habit of giving yourself time to do the things you enjoy, you create some much-needed distance from all the doom and gloom.

## Exercise

While you might be tempted to hibernate through the winter, oversleeping is only going to drive down your productivity and morale. By keeping yourself active, your body will reward you warmth and mood boosting hormones!

For maximum effect this winter, why not try taking an early morning walk to soak up some of that natural sunlight.

## Reach Out

Social interaction is known to protect against all forms of depression. This winter, try to stay in contact with friends and family. While current circumstances make it difficult to meet in person, there is a wide variety of social apps that can help you stay connected.

If you feel that your mental health is being affected this winter, be sure to reach out to your support system or a mental health support service as soon as possible. We recommend that you get in touch with Able Futures which is a government funded charity, which can provide a program/support for all matters relating to mental health, their website is [able-futures.co.uk](http://able-futures.co.uk) and their direct number is 0800 321 3137.