



S H E E R L U X E

10 TIPS TO BEAT THE JANUARY BLUES

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Incase you were unaware, January 18th is Blue Monday, Yep, sorry to put a downer on the start of the week, but today is apparently the most depressing day of the year. So, who better to curb those January blues than Susanna Halonen, a qualified happiness life coach and author of Screw Finding Your Passion. Read on for her 10 tips on how to stay happy this January no matter what life throws at you...

January blues are one of the most common challenges at this time of the year. We're deep in winter and the weather is cold, dark and wet. We've just wrapped up all the Christmas fun and are back to routine. It's common to have a low energy and mood this time of the year – but that doesn't mean you can't do anything to combat it.

For a long time I used to fight all kinds of blues. I was a naturally pessimistic person and when things went wrong, I used to go to really miserable places. Eventually I felt so desperate for change I went and did a Masters of Science in Applied Positive Psychology, also known as the science of happiness and human performance. As I studied what makes us happy and successful, I tested every theory and practice on myself. And it worked. Now I can happily call myself a trained optimist.

Here are my 10 top ways to turn your mood into a more positive one...

1. Practice gratitude

It's a simple concept but such a powerful one. When you feel low it's natural to struggle with appreciation. That means you have to work extra hard at it. Try gratitude journaling by finishing every day with writing three specific things you were grateful for. This will remind you of all the things you have to be grateful for, put things into perspective and start turning your mind into an optimistic one.

2. Remember why you're here

Identify what makes you feel happy and fulfilled and build your lifestyle based on that. Forget what society thinks or says you should do. Do what feels right for you. You will become a magnet of happiness attracting goodness into your life, and a sun that shines happiness rays on everyone around you.

3. Be kind to yourself

These harsher, colder weather conditions take a toll on your mind and body. Don't beat yourself up for feeling more tired or being less productive. It's ok for you to not be on top form 24/7. Cut yourself some slack and show kindness toward your body by giving it enough sleep and nourishing it with all the nutrients you can.

4. Keep moving your body

When you're feeling lethargic in January, it's easy to think you're too tired to exercise. You have to fight this lethargy with action. The more you move, the better you'll feel. You don't need go to a spinning class or for an hour's jog if you're feeling rough. Instead, do nourishing practices that keep you moving in a soft, nurturing way. Things like swimming, yoga and taking brisk walks in the fresh air. The key is to get any type of movement in so your body starts producing more endorphins, or happy hormones.

5. Get outside as much as you can

I don't care if it's raining cats and dogs, you can put a raincoat and wellies on and brave the weather. Fresh winter air is beautifully crisp and it will help fill your lungs with oxygen, as well as help regulate your body's natural energy and mood levels. It will also help you sleep better at night which helps balance your happiness levels. As my 93-year old Grandma wisely says, "There is no bad weather, only bad clothes."

6. Keep on smiling

Even a fake smile triggers your brain's reward mechanism and induces positive emotions. It produces endorphins, or happy hormones, like exercise does, and will lower your anxiety and blood pressure. The more you smile the better you feel and the better you feel the more you want to smile.

7. Make time for more sleep

It's natural to need more sleep at this time of the year. There is less sunlight to feed your vitamin D levels and to activate the serotonin and cortisol levels in your brain. This makes it natural for your body's energy levels to drop. Your body may need more time to recharge and to recuperate from a hard day's work so give it the time it needs. Try to keep your sleep routine consistent by going to bed at the same time everyday and waking up at the same time every morning, because this will also help regulate your circadian sleep rhythms and improve the quality of sleep you get.

8. Minimise your screen time

In winter it's easy for you to get stuck indoors chained to your work screen, smartphone or TV because you don't feel an incentive to go out into the dark, miserable weather. You have to combat this feeling by doing exactly the opposite. Force yourself to finish work on time so you don't drive yourself to the ground, and cap the amount of TV you allow yourself in a day. Give yourself a

deadline every night to shut off your smartphone. These will help eliminate the light pollution you get from screens and will make it less likely for you to suffer from sleep disturbances which are more common in the winter when there is less sunlight to regulate your natural bodily rhythm.

9. Create cosy spaces in your home

This is the perfect time of the year to turn your living space into your own little happy place. Light candles, have some winter flowers on the table, bake yourself some yummy treats and get cosy with a hot cup of your favourite herbal tea. Wrap yourself up in a nice warm blanket and pick up a good book. This will help your mind unwind and your body to recharge – and remind you there are some things that are so much cosier in winter!

10. Cuddle up

Physical contact is a natural desire for any human being and there is an expansive amount of research supporting its positive effects on your mood and your energy. Have a movie night in and cuddle up with your partner on the sofa. Give your friends longer hugs. Hold your kids closer. Glue your dog to your lap.

Best of all, happiness is contagious. The happier you are, the happier you will make the people around you. Beat your January blues and you'll be helping your family, friends and coworkers to beat the blues, too.

About the Author: Susanna Halonen is a qualified happiness life coach and author of [Screw Finding Your Passion](#). You can follow her on twitter [@SuskyH](#) and sign-up for free happiness updates at happyologist.co.uk.

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