Easing the Winter Woes

February 27, 2012 By Cristina Gonzalez

Brrr, baby, it's cold outside. And dark. This can make things look bleak. If you're feeling tired, unmotivated and sad, you may be one of the millions of people who struggle with seasonal affective disorder (SAD). Experts think the low-grade depression is the brain's response to a lack of natural light (winter days are oh-so-short). While symptoms usually melt away with the first signs of spring, the winter months can be brutal. Mental health is a crucial component to overall health, so keeping your spirits up should be an integral part of your health care routine. Brightening up your day will brighten up your health and chase your blues away.

Five Ways to Lighten Up

- Turn it on. Buy a SAD therapy light. These super bright stunners are built to mimic sunlight and give you that extra oomph of vitamin D. In general, if you light up for as little as 30 minutes per day, your spirits will start to soar.
- Embrace the cold. Stop fighting and give in to the season. Celebrate winter! Invite some friends over, build a fire and serve cups of hot cocoa. The next time the day turns dreary you'll have warm memories to push you through.
- Make more of the morning. The days are shorter and darker, but what if you could turn back time? Instead of rushing out the door to work, set your alarm an hour earlier and make the most of the bright mornings. Switch to an a.m. workout; run errands while the sun is still glowing; or simply take the time for a leisurely morning.
- Get moving. Exercise releases "feel-good" chemicals that may ease depression, and it increases body temp, which has calming effects. Whether it's the gym, a Wii session or Jazzercise—you gotta shake your thing.
- Bribe yourself. To break up the endless, dull days, schedule something to look forward to. The cold months will zoom by if you are looking forward to an afternoon treat of sipping hot cider or

a weekend project of building snowmen. The point is to add some bright spots to your day, week or month—and to your winter.

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http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/Winter-SAD-HIV-21952-5457