



Beating Winter Blues - Anytime!

As the song says "ain't no cure for the summertime blues", but winter blues? No problem! I know, I know – it's common for us to feel depressed or isolated during the winter months. Less daylight, lower physical resistance, being house-bound or driving during poor weather conditions, and a lack of friends, family and party-filled holidays provide ample opportunity for drifting into prolonged sadness and negative thinking. Add to these temporary circumstances the possibilities of real illness, personal loss or financial insecurity and depression can become your closest companion, nurturing itself in the downward spiral of your sadness, vulnerability and sense of aimless future. It sounds awful, and for those of us who have been there, it truly is. It takes a massive will to begin the process to overcome this state. So, why did I write above that getting over the winter blues is "no problem"? Because, while we often cannot control the circumstances of our lives we can control or choose our response. And, the choice we make will define our prevailing emotional state every waking hour of our lives.

There are tools we can all use to encourage a positive, action-oriented state of mind. Whether we're feeling blue from a general sense of having less than we want or whether depression is triggered by truly daunting circumstance, there are a variety of means to overcome the negative thinking preventing us from moving forward to improve our situation. Here are just two categories and examples of each. From these, I know you'll find several appropriate for you and what you're facing, now during the winter or any time depression cuddles up to you.

GRATITUDE

Find 10 things in your life for which you are truly grateful yet often take for granted. Want a simple reminder of what you have? George Burns once said that for him, a great day was just waking up and not seeing candles, a church and his friends dressed in black! Pretty basic, but you get the idea – each day of life is a new opportunity to learn, imagine, create, help others, enjoy the company of friends and loved ones, or sit down to a dynamite meal. Think this is corny stuff? Well, have you considered the alternatives? Here are some wonderful circumstances to be grateful for:

- decent air to breathe,
- hot and cold running water
- flush toilets
- many communications and transportation alternatives
- the ability and opportunity to earn a living,
- a home in which to sleep, eat and relax,
- ample clean food and the option to buy what we need,
- family, friends and pets,
- living in a democracy
- abundant natural resources,
- clothing to protect us from the elements or even enhance our appearance
- the gift of choice (my personal favorite – the choice to act, be who we wish is extraordinarily powerful)

So – don't like my list? Find 10 things of your own and each day, relish their availability to you, the convenience or pleasure they add to your life and say "thank you". This simple act, repeated daily, can have a powerful influence on your state of mind. After all, we are what we think. Get rid of negative self-talk by replacing it with only positives, pleasures, laughs and thanks ACTION.

Ok, maybe the above does not seem to fit your situation; maybe you're an action-oriented type who wants to just do something to get over the pain of your blues. Here are some ideas for relief from the wrenching hold situational depression can take.

- 1) Socialize – enjoy or expand the friendships and casual acquaintances you have. Spontaneously invite someone for coffee, a movie, shopping, bowling, attend a class or workshop, form a book club, a chain letter, a joke catalog. Do what kids do: make a play date!
- 2) Be selfish – think I'm kidding? No way! Some good old fashioned pampering is a well-deserved treat that can have a tremendously uplifting impact. Have you wanted to do or buy something that you've put off as frivolous? Now's the time to counteract the blues with something special that will give you pleasure or satisfaction by doing for yourself what no one else might. I'm not talking about breaking the bank – maybe some new doodad for your home office, a massage, a show or concert w/your favorite artist, a day off from work as a "mental health" day – whatever you can do to lift yourself without depriving yourself of some other necessity (enough to pay this month's rent, car loan, insurance premium, etc.!).
- 3) Rent a happy or funny movie –laughter is not only good for your soul but your body as well. Did you know that laughter creates endorphins (your body's natural mood elevators and pain killers)? It also encourages the creation of red blood cells and T-cells, critical to a healthy immune system. So find some additional reasons to laugh today – go rent a Three Stooges movie!
- 4) Volunteer – remarkably, something we can do to benefit others can have an equal impact for us. The ability to focus on the needs of others, often in more difficult, long-term circumstances than our own, can quickly divert our inclination to feel sorry for ourselves.
- 5) Get out of the past and introduce yourself to the here and now; often it's the past – regrets, mistakes, missed opportunities, hurts, anger, and that most useless of emotions, guilt – and not the present which catapults us into bouts of the blues. Why ignore the opportunity for pleasure, change and success ahead for the immutable past? Give this up and you'll expand the energy available to you for many more positive activities!
- 6) Get support – call 5 people who you trust and respect (or just 2) and ask that once a week they email you with some quality or recollection about you that they admire, enjoy, appreciate. There's nothing like sincere appreciation from others to help us focus on the best in ourselves rather than what we perceive as the worst.

Does this all sound simplistic? Perhaps. Certainly, many of us face daunting situations for which simple panaceas sound foolish. But, regardless of the severity of what causes your winter blues, facing them with the strength and emotional reserves available through these suggestions can only improve our ability to overcome the challenges we face. Focus on the good things in your life and you'll find it becomes easier to take action to enhance or improve the challenges you face. And, with gratitude in your heart, you'll likely have a smile on your face or in your eyes. Think others won't notice this and respond to you in a more positive way? Just try it!

By Andrea Feinberg



© Copyright 2004 Andrea Feinberg for Coaching Insight. All rights reserved.
516.338.6842 / 1(800).725.9694 PIN# 55
www.coachinginsight.com