#1 Banish the Winter Blues: Action Stations

created by Dr Sophie Bostock
Welcome

Hi, huge thanks for taking part in the Better Sleep series, which aims to equip you with the knowledge, tools and techniques you need to take control of your sleep, lift your mood and optimise your performance.

After each webinar there will be a workbook with some exercises to help remind you of the content, and encourage you to take action. The webinar is just a start - the real benefits will come through small changes to your daily habits.

#1 Banishing the Winter Blues
We’ve started with the winter blues since it’s a great way in to understand the importance of circadian rhythms and the power of light, and darkness. This topic also helps to demonstrate that sleep and emotional wellbeing are interlinked. Many of the things you can do to improve your mood will improve sleep, and vice versa. So, this week…

- Test where you sit on the seasonality spectrum with the questionnaire
- See how many of the 12 Days of Pre-Christmas Cheer you can tick off!
- Commit to trying one new daily habit

I really hope you’ll join webinar #2: Strategies for Shift Workers on Monday 14th December. This will be of interest to anyone who works late or night shifts, lives or works with a shift worker or just wants to learn more about sleep. If you have long standing sleep issues, look out for webinar #3 on 7th January 2021.

We’d hugely welcome your feedback, questions and ideas throughout the Better Sleep series to make it as helpful as possible for you, and your colleagues.

Thanks again for joining in, and Sleep Well.
Sophie

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# How seasonal are you?

To see where you sit on the scale, from ‘season-resistant’ to the deep blue of winter blues, answers the questions below.

1. To what degree do you think the following change with the seasons for you? *Circle one answer for each of the 6 areas, then tot up your scores.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>No change</th>
<th>Slight change</th>
<th>Moderate change</th>
<th>Marked change</th>
<th>Extremely marked change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sleep length</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social activity</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mood (wellbeing)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appetite</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy level</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total ____ / 24**

2. If you experience changes with the seasons, to what extent are these a problem for you? *(Select one.)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intensity</th>
<th>Mild</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Marked</th>
<th>Severe</th>
<th>Disabling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Interpreting your score.**

For Q1, most people with full-blown SAD have scores of >=11, while people with the winter blues may have scores of 8, 9 or 10. *These are just rough guidelines, not hard-and-fast rules.* If you ticked severe or disabling to Q2 above, regardless of your scores to Q1, consider medical help. This is really important if you routinely feeling depressed or hopeless, if you’re having difficulty functioning at work, or at home, or if you feel that your sleep or eating patterns are out of control. Seasonal depression is still depression. While following the content in this session can help, please seek medical care if you’re having difficulty coping.

Modified from the Seasonal Pattern Assessment Questionnaire (SPAP) of N. E. Rosenthal, G. Bradt, and T. Wehr (public domain).

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BANISH THE WINTER BLUES

12 Days of Pre-Christmas Cheer

1. Step outside for 10 min with a morning brew
2. Sign up for a free trial of a meditation app
3. Clean your windows. Seriously – more sunlight!
4. Try a cold shower for 10 secs more than your last
5. Give a household member a hug for 20 secs (covid permitting)
6. Write down 3 things you’re grateful for & why
7. Go for a walk in nature and take a nice photo
8. Set the night mode on your phone an hour before bed
9. Cook something new containing 3+ vegetables
10. Work by the window, open the blinds or try a SAD lamp
11. Challenge a friend to sign up to an online class
12. Wrap up warm at night and go and find some stars

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One new habit

Stanford behaviour change expert, B.J. Fogg, explains that to change behaviour, we simply need Motivation, Ability and a Prompt. To make that behaviour a habit, it should also feel good, so that we’re more likely to repeat it.

Hopefully the webinar has left you feeling pumped to get started, but research shows that relying on motivation is an unlikely way to develop a new habit. The more tired or low you feel when you start, the less likely you are to have the va va voom to stick to new behaviour – our motivation is fickle, it goes up and down.

So.. to make sure you always have the ability, the key is to start with something really easy.. Which requires very little motivation! Once you’ve successfully adopted one new habit, you’ll find it easier (and have more energy) to add more.

For example, here are 10 of the ideas we discussed in the webinar which could improve both sleep quality AND your winter energy levels:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do it now</th>
<th>Could try this</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wake up at the same time every day (where shifts allow)</strong></td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enjoy at least 10min daylight or bright light soon after waking up</strong></td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use night settings on tech or use blue light glasses after dark</strong></td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sleep in a dark environment e.g. with blackout blinds, or eye mask</strong></td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use a specialist SAD lamp for 30 minutes per day, in the morning</strong></td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Try a daily vitamin D supplement (or multivitamin)</strong></td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Get plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables – at least 5 a day</strong></td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Get into nature for 120 minutes per week</strong></td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cultivate a positive winter loving mindset e.g. daily winter photo diary</strong></td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speak to a close friend or family member at least once a day</strong></td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Limited evidence so far this will improve sleep or SAD, but unlikely to do harm, and good for bone health

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Make a commitment

Once you’ve picked ONE habit to have a go at, you’re ready to choose a prompt.

The prompt is key – it’s a reminder to help nudge you to change.
• Try to anchor a behavior to an existing part of your routine. So, for example, if you always have a cup of tea in mid morning, think about getting outside for a few minutes or using a SAD lamp each day at the same time.
• Use a visible or audible reminder, such as a colourful note next to the kettle, or your fridge, and/or set an alarm on your phone.
• You could also recruit a member of your household to be an active prompt.

Alrighty, last things last. You’re much more likely to adopt a new habit if you commit to it! So please just take 30 seconds and write in what your plans are. Ideally, tell a friend, colleague or family member, so that you can hold each other to account... Then get cracking! I look forward to hearing how you’ve got on 😊

Example...

Target Habit?
I’m going to stop scrolling through social media in bed

How can you make it really easy?
Leave my phone to charge in the kitchen before I go to bed, use an old alarm clock

What will be your Prompt?
Set a 9pm alarm to switch my phone off and move my charger downstairs

How will you feel good about this?
I’ll smile to myself, and tick off the Sleep Habit Tracker in the kitchen

My New Habit:

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