

## **Beating the winter doldrums**

By Ernestine Brown

If ever there was a time to put your best foot forward, it surely is when we are in what I call the winter doldrums. Unless we have been blessed with an abundance of sunshine since this column was written, we have had our share of dark and dreary days this winter.

According to medical experts, days on end without sunshine can have a deep effect on our moods and our well being.

However, I have a plan that for me, at least, almost entirely erases that feeling of melancholy (yes, that's what the experts call the winter blahs), and I would like to pass it on to you.

First of all, I connect with people who are happy people. This is not the time to listen to other people's ailments. That's not to say you don't lend a sympathetic ear, but for goodness sake, communicate with positive people you know. Don't shut those out of your life who need you, but remember, you count too. So it's important, when you have the winter blahs, that you reach out to those in your family or circle of friends who are uplifting and can make you smile!

I have a few things I do around my home that have a great effect on my attitude during the winter blahs. First of all, I open the curtains wide, but I still put on my favourite lamps in the room I am sitting in. I don't want to look into dark and dreary corners! I know, I know. What about wasting electricity? Put it out of your mind, and save it when the days are longer and the sun is shining. Now you need light around you.

Visit your local library and bring home a bag full of books. Make sure they are books you will enjoy. Save the dreary ones for the summertime.

Take lots of "tea" breaks. Or "coffee" breaks. Or whatever your favourite drink is. Take it to that corner where you have turned on the light, wrap

yourself in a blanket, and settle in for a spell of solitude. Just you, a warm and inviting room, and a good book. Don't you feel better already just thinking about it? Put some music on low, and wallow in the comfort you are going to feel.

Never have time to catch up on your photo albums? What a great time to do it! Set up a card table in your living room (beside that lovely light, of course), and relive those good and happy times through the pictures you haven't looked at in ages. Sort. Arrange. Label. Do this for those who will enjoy them in years to come. There is nothing more frustrating to me than looking at wonderful old pictures, and not having a clue who they are, simply because someone neglected to write on the back of each one? Is that Aunt Lucy? Goodness knows.

This time of year, once or twice a month, I do something that gives me a real lift. I bundle up in warm outdoor clothes, turn off the heat, and open the doors and windows wide! I let the air into the house for about two hours. Sometimes I will sit on the deck, or sometimes I will simply wait it out in the house. Then I enjoy the freshness inside.

What better time to set up that card table again, and dig into a challenging jig-saw puzzle. You can work at it, or leave it, whenever the spirit moves you.

What better time to invite a neighbour in for lunch. It doesn't have to be gourmet...a sandwich and a bowl of soup will do nicely.

What better time to put your best foot forward, even if you are the only one to witness it. That's why every morning, I dress to the nines... as if I am going to visit a friend. On goes a favourite outfit...on goes the makeup...on goes some favourite jewellery. I don't think anything pulls me down faster than lolling around all day in a nightgown and ratty housecoat when the weather is bad. To feel good, I have to look good!

It is a known fact, that this time of year you will find the emergency rooms full. I'm not saying the people there waiting to see a doctor are imagining they are suffering from some crippling disease. But when we are not feeling well mentally, we are bound to ail physically.

By the time you read this, hopefully the sun will be shining more days than not. If the dark and dreary days persist, try my cure. If at least one or two of the tricks work for you, this column will not have been written in vain.

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