

Wellbeing And Mental Health Challenges In Winter

Colder weather and shorter days lead to a natural feeling of wanting to comfort ourselves. For many this time of year is a struggle, maybe not liking the cold weather, finding it harder with less light, less social interaction and the sense of less time without those long summer days to do all the things we enjoy doing.



Whilst Autumn and Winter may seem to be not that productive in nature, it is in fact a time when trees send their roots deeper into the soil, regenerating for the spring to come. Now is the time to do the same for yourself, store your energy, replenish your soul, enjoy time for yourself so that when you are ready to embrace life with a more energetic pathway, you can.

The Challenge Of Winter

In this colder weather, we are less inclined to be active and get up and do things. It can be tempting to stay in bed longer, go to bed earlier, come home and put some comfortable clothes on rather than your running gear and pound the pavements. Although winter is a time where we should be nourishing ourselves, storing energy and replenishing ourselves for the coming year ahead, it doesn't mean a time to be docile and take time off from wellbeing.

It can be harder to be motivated to keep moving, get fresh air and make sure we are eating a healthy balanced diet. But you have to think of it as a bank account... the more we put in now, the more we will have saved for our future.

Therefore we have to keep investing in our wellbeing to make sure that we are living the best version of our life.

Winter can impact how we behave during this time of year so having an awareness of this can be the first step to changing how you react and how you look after yourself during this season.

Think about your food choices. We are less likely to make healthy food choices, at this time of year favouring more calorie-dense foods to give us comfort, keep us warm and boost our mood. Make sure that you are still getting your five a day, taking on supplements if needed to make up for a lack of vitamin D from the sun and keeping an eye on your water intake to keep hydrated.

Where Do We Go Wrong?

Looking after our wellbeing takes more effort in winter. During the warmer summer months, it is easier to have a more passive exercise routine such as walking to work, being outside more during our lunch break and fitting more into the longer days. For those where being active and eating healthy is a daily challenge and not part of a regular routine, winter is often considered 'time out', where bad habits can creep in.

We often give ourselves permission to let our attention to our wellbeing slide, especially at Christmas, often using New Year's resolutions as the perceived time to reset.

But this is a vicious cycle – the less we move, the harder it is to move, the more we eat, the more we want to eat/crave food, the more we sleep, the more tired we feel, and the fewer endorphins we generate the lower our mood gets. So it pays to get out of this cycle by coming up with a winter wellbeing plan.

Think about how you want to feel this season and how you can start building some positive powerful habits to be feeling your best self at what often is the hardest part of the year.

Your Winter Wellbeing Plan – Courtesy Of We Are Wellbeing

Wellbeing in winter needs to be personal to you. You do you when it comes to self care, what you need in the moment. Now is the time to take note when our bodies are telling us we need to rest or if we are craving vegetables, we may be lacking in nutrients our bodies need. By getting in touch with how we feel after doing certain activities and eating certain foods we can better understand what we actually need.

With shorter, darker days we often don't want to do much that involves stepping out of the house. This weekend, embrace the feeling that it's perfectly okay to stay indoors. Be in charge of your time. Do what makes you happy; whether it's watching a movie snuggled on the sofa, playing board games or reading your favourite book all afternoon. With the weather against us at this time of year, take this as permission to stay at home and stay cosy and embrace time for "me".

Try to book at least one day or half-day if that feels too much for yourself in each month. Put this in your diary or schedule as "ME TIME" and be proud of it. This is about putting yourself first to boost your self care and enhance how you can be of service to others. By planning it in your diary, you are committing to yourself and are also closing that time off to doing anything else.

The ME TIME is your time, do what you want to do. Have a lie-in, read a book, go for a walk, do what you like – just no time commitments to anyone without that feeling of guilt, ENJOY!

Book in some time with yourself to embrace the change in seasons, find self care practices that fit in with your climate, your mood, your budget and your desires. I encourage you to take a leaf out of nature's book. Start battening down the hatches, recharging and nurturing so that come the turn into Spring you can burst into new life, new energy and a fresh approach with renewed energy.

