



# Blue Monday: How to cope with winter blues

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Care

## What is Blue Monday?

The third Monday in January has become known as Blue Monday, allegedly due to the culmination of post-Christmas blues, short hours of daylight and the financial impact of the festive period hitting our bank accounts.

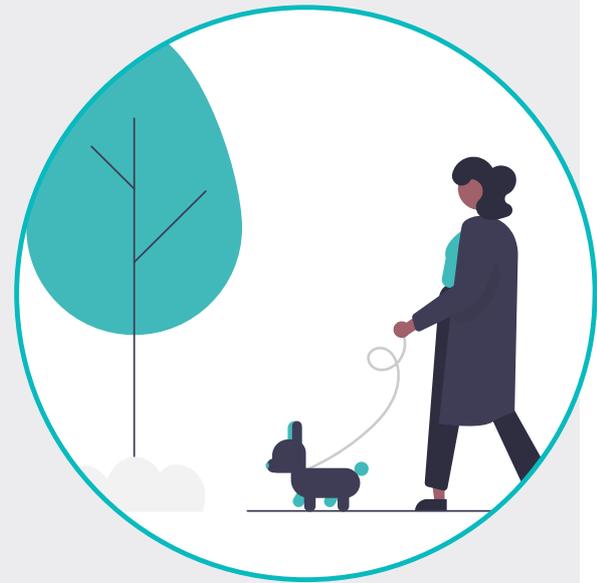
Alison Simmons, Senior Mental Health Nurse from FSB Care, has put together seven practical tips for lifting your mood during the winter months.

### Spend time in daylight

Make the most of daylight by opening blinds, sitting closer to the window at home or work, or even trimming back tree branches to let in more light.

Get outside on your break, take a long walk, eat lunch in the park or simply sit on a bench and soak up the winter sun.

What if it's not sunny? Even on cold or cloudy days, outdoor light can help, especially if you spend time outdoors within 2 hours of getting up in the morning.

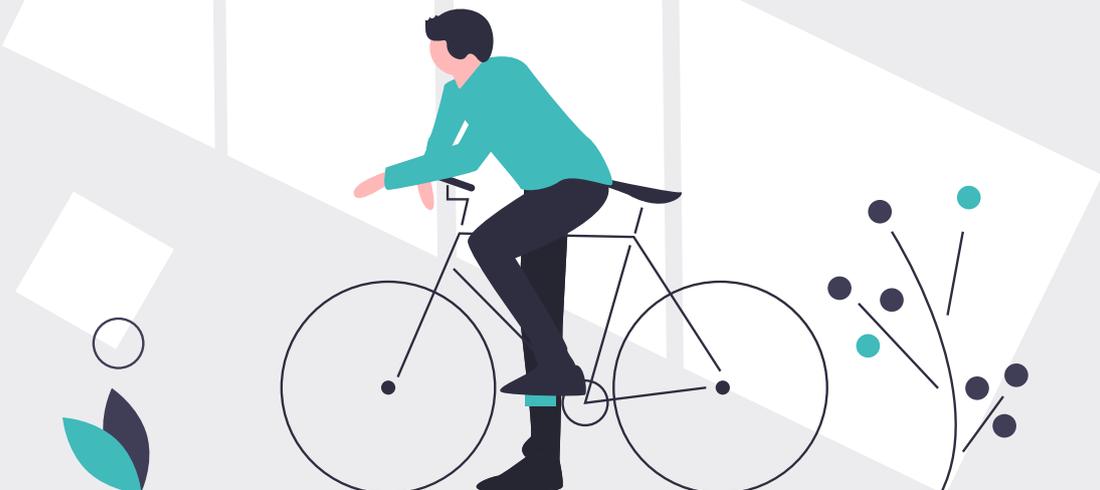


### Physical activity

Exercise and other types of physical activity help relieve stress and anxiety. Being more fit can make you feel better about yourself, too, which can lift your mood.

You could go for a walk in a new part of town, or even get outside and do some gardening ready for spring.

Even if you don't have a garden, there are plenty of free online home workouts that you can follow along with to get moving.



## Meditation / Guided imagery

There are lots of apps and online resources available giving a wide range of activities such as breathing exercises, guided meditations, mindfulness activities, visualisation exercises and positive affirmations.



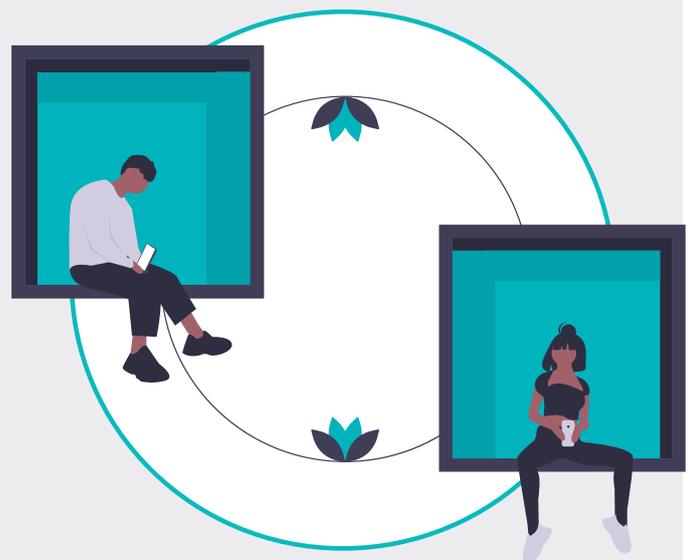
## Relaxation

Find time to relax, whether it's doing a hobby that you enjoy or trying a new activity. From working your way through your list of books to read, to experimenting with a new recipe, there are many ways we can switch off.

As our screen time has increased over the past year, try moving away from phones, tablets and computers and disconnecting.

## Maintain connections

Spend time with your family and friends – you could combine this with exercise and getting outdoors, organise video calls and online quizzes to catch-up, or simply pick up the phone for a conversation!



## Gratitude and Kindness

Developing a habit of recognising the good things in life and being grateful for them and being kind to yourself, as well as other people, can lead to positive and fulfilling feelings. Journaling can be a great way to reflect and remind of positive aspects and be grateful.

## Light therapy

Some people find that light boxes can help by simulating sunlight exposure. The brain is fooled into producing less melatonin, resulting in you feeling less sleepy.



## More than just the winter blues?

While many of us suffer from lower mood and more fatigue in the winter months, the shortage of daylight can cause significant problems for some people.

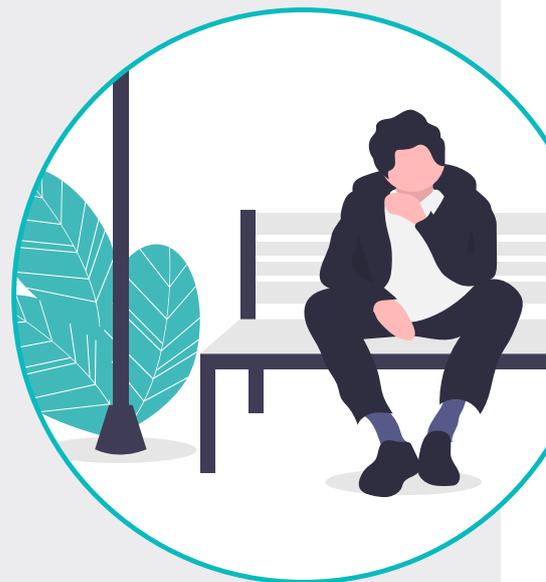
### What is Seasonal Affective Disorder?

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a type of depression that comes and goes in a seasonal pattern. It is sometimes known as “winter depression” because the symptoms usually appear with the arrival of autumn or winter.

29% of adults experience some symptoms of SAD at this time of year, ranging from low energy levels, to low self-esteem and anxiety.

#### Typical symptoms include:

- Losing interest in activities normally enjoyed
- Having low energy
- Having problems with sleeping
- Experiencing changes in appetite or weight
- Feeling sluggish or agitated
- Having difficulty concentrating
- Feeling hopeless, worthless or guilty
- Having frequent thoughts of death or suicide



### We're here for you

Whilst self-care is an important source of help, such as the tips suggested above, external professional help is also sometimes necessary. Your GP should be your first port of call when persistent feelings of low mood, stress or anxiety are recognised.

If you feel like you're suffering from symptoms of SAD, other mental health issues or simply want to talk to someone, we're here to listen.

FSB Care is available free of charge to members and provides long-term access to a registered mental health nurse for professional advice, guidance and support, as well as help sourcing the most appropriate form of therapy.

Visit [fsb.org.uk/care](https://fsb.org.uk/care) to learn more about how FSB Care can support you.

**Call: 0808 2020 888\***

**Email: [customerservices@fsb.org.uk](mailto:customerservices@fsb.org.uk)**

** [@FSBCustomerCare](https://twitter.com/FSBCustomerCare)**

\*8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday, excluding Bank Holidays

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