



Winter Blues

Looking after toddlers is hard work at any time, but winter can be particularly tough. The days get shorter, the nights get longer, the weather deteriorates and everything seems so much more dreary. It's common to start feeling low at this time of year. In fact 1 in 8 people in the UK suffer from the 'winter blues'. If you're one of those then try these ideas to improve your mood.



Lighten up

Since the winter blues are thought to be caused by the lack of sunlight during the shorter, duller winter days, it makes sense to get as much light into your life as possible. Get outside as often as possible, especially on bright, sunny days. Even sitting by a window can help.



Eat well

The winter blues can make you crave carbohydrates and sugary foods, but it's important to eat plenty of fruit and vegetables too.



Get active

30 minutes of vigorous exercise three times a week is effective against depression. It increases the levels of the mood-enhancing hormone serotonin, provides a change of scene and helps you meet new people e.g. at toddler-friendly swimming sessions. Outdoor exercise will have a double benefit as you'll gain some daylight. MIND, the mental health charity, says that a one-hour walk in the middle of the day is an effective way to beat the winter blues.

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

In the UK, about 1 in 50 people suffer from SAD. It's more common among women and among 18-30 year-olds. Symptoms occur from September to April and are worst when the days are shortest during December, January and February. A diagnosis can be made after three or more consecutive winters of symptoms.

Key symptoms of SAD

- Depression
- Sleep problems
- Lethargy
- Over-eating
- Loss of concentration
- Anxiety
- Loss of libido

85% of sufferers respond to light therapy, but counselling and some types of antidepressants may also be useful.

Need someone to talk to?

If you are 'feeling low' or 'struggling a bit' it can be helpful to talk to someone.

Let your toddler group leader know how you are feeling or contact Care for the Family on **(029) 2081 0800**.

Information from

www.sada.org.uk

www.mind.org.uk/help/diagnoses_and_conditions/seasonal_affective_disorder

www.nhs.uk/conditions/seasonal-affective-disorder

Your Family Charity

Care for the Family has been supporting and encouraging families in the UK since 1988. Its family-building events have been attended by over 320,000 people and many more have been helped through special initiatives - including stepfamilies, bereaved parents and those parenting alone. Founded by best-selling author and speaker Rob Parsons, the charity is committed to strengthening family life and helping those who face family difficulties.

The information in this handout is supplied in good faith, but Care for the Family cannot accept responsibility for any advice or recommendations made by other organisations or websites.

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Care for the Family - A Christian response to a world of need.
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