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pour la santé mentale  
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## Tips to combat the 'winter blues' in 2021

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As the holidays pass and the doldrums of winter wear on, many people begin to experience lower mood and mild symptoms of depression. With the pandemic complicating matters, the 'winter blues' could be even more challenging and affect more people this year.

The winter blues are so common that they've even been used as a marketing ploy. You may have heard of 'Blue Monday.' Each year, the third the Monday in January is referred to as 'the most depressing day of the year' in news reports and across social media. This myth gained steam in 2005 when a vacation agency in the U.K. commissioned a former lecturer at Cardiff University to determine the most depressing day of the year to sell vacations.

While the idea of one particular day being 'most depressing' has been widely debunked, the winter blues are indeed a real thing.

Research in Ontario suggests 15 per cent of the population has experienced the winter blues, symptoms of which may include changes in appetite, lethargy and low mood. You may also be familiar with the more commonly-known seasonal affective disorder, which is a serious form of depression that affects about two per cent of the population.

If you're worried that you're susceptible to the winter blues, there's lots you can do get through the winter season in a healthy way. Here are some tips:

- Reduce social isolation: a lack of social connection can intensify feelings of loneliness and low mood, so do things like tell others you appreciate them, gather virtually, join a new online group, or make a schedule of reminders to stay in touch with others.
- Take care of your physical health: regular exercise can help you feel less stressed, and eating healthy can increase your energy. Going for walks, eating nutritious foods and keeping a consistent sleep schedule will all aid the way you feel.
- Get some sunlight: vitamin D deficiency can be a real problem for many during the winter months. More sunlight can help with that. Try to get outdoors during the day, keep curtains open and sit near a window when you can.
- Practice self-care: this can be anything that's healthy and brings you joy. Take up a hobby, watch a new show or movie. Treat yourself!

**The information provided is not a substitute for professional advice. If you need advice, please consult a qualified health care professional. For further information or if you want to access our services at CMHA please call 1-800-493-8271 or visit our web site at [www.cmha-east.on.ca](http://www.cmha-east.on.ca)**