

Navigating the January Blues



“Winter reminds us the truth that – If we can endure the coldest of times – Nothing can dim the warmth of our spirit – The air may be cold – but it can’t – Extinguish the fire within our souls – Remember – you are strong and capable”- Anonymous

Helpful Resources:

Occupational Health, Safety & Wellness

- Workplace Mental Wellness Practitioner, KGH ext. 6784
- Occupational Health Nurses, KGH ext. 4389
- kingstonhsc.ca/staff-wellness

Programs and resources:

- HDH on-site gym
- Corporate gym membership discounts
- Nutrition programs and resources
- Discounted on-site massage therapy - *by appointment*
 - Wednesdays at KGH Site
 - Thursdays at HDH site

Homewood Health (EFAP)

- 1-800-663-1142
- <https://homeweb.ca/>
 - Customer Account Name: Kingston Health Sciences Centre
 - Invitation Code: KHS141

Understanding the “January Blues”

The "January Blues" is when many people feel a bit down in the first month of the year. After the busy holiday season, things shift as life goes back to normal, celebrations end, and the weather gets colder with shorter days. Going from the festive holidays to the quieter days of January can make many of us feel a bit sad. This feeling is stronger as we return to work or school with less daylight. It's not just about personal stuff – lots of people feel this way. The January blues happens because of the changes in the season, both outside and in our feelings. Knowing that others feel it too, we can handle it better by being understanding, taking care of ourselves, and being proactive about our mental well-being.

The January blues can be a mix of emotions post-holidays. Whether a natural response or a part of a broader condition, proactive steps like social planning, sunlight exposure, and self-care can help. If symptoms persist, seek guidance from a mental health professional.

Coping Strategies for January Blues

1. Manage Social Engagement:

Recognize social fatigue and balance social interactions through self-care and solitude. For introverts, preparing for the quieter January period beforehand can prevent overwhelming fatigue. Extroverts can maintain social connections through activities like coffee dates, luncheons, or volunteer work.

2. Getting Sunlight:

If the January blues are linked to seasonal patterns of depression, increasing sunlight exposure can be beneficial. Spending time outdoors and opening curtains and blinds during the darker winter months may help mitigate symptoms.

3. Social Media Moderation:

During periods of low mood, reducing social media exposure can be beneficial. While social media fosters connection, it can also contribute to unhealthy mindsets and exacerbate symptoms of body dysmorphia and depression.

4. Planning Fun Activities:

Proactively plan enjoyable activities for January to provide something to anticipate. This could be a social event with friends or a solo outing to a favorite bookstore and coffee shop.

5. Embracing Low Moods:

Recognize that experiencing low mood in January is natural. Reframing it as a necessary period of rest and reflection allows individuals to show understanding to themselves and others, fostering habits that support well-being.

Distinguishing Between SAD and January Blues:

“January Blues” may stem from Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), now acknowledged as major depressive disorder with a seasonal pattern. This diagnosis demands specific clinical criteria, including significant impairment, a consistent seasonal pattern over two years, and a predominance of seasonal depression. Recognizing mental health signs in loved ones is vital for offering support and seeking professional help.



Self-directed Resources:

MindShift CBT App by Anxiety Canada

LifeSpeak Mental Health & Resilience Resources

Accessing LifeSpeak is simple. You and your family can access the platform from any computer or mobile device [here](#). Access ID: lifespeak

Balance App

Practice Mindfulness & Meditation

References:

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- LifeSpeak. (n.d.). Actionable Tips from LifeSpeak Experts: Strategies for Managing Low Mood. <https://khsccprovidencecare.lifespeak.com/experblog/iframe/actionable-tips-from-lifespeak-experts--strategies-for-managing-low-mood-5977?sharekey=683ed664-2377-449f-a595-183d2d2c9e0a&lang=en>
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What to Watch for: Common Signs and Symptoms

1. Changes in Behaviour

- Sleep pattern shifts
- Significant changes in appetite or weight
- Pulling away from social activities
- Unexplained mood swings
- Less interest in personal care

2. Emotional Changes

- Persistent feelings of sadness
- Frequent mood swings
- Thoughts of self-harm or suicide
- Increased sensitivity to criticism

3. Cognitive Changes

- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Memory problems
- Slowed thinking
- Persistent negative thoughts

4. Physical Symptoms

- Unexplained aches and pains
- Persistent fatigue
- Changes in libido
- Digestive issues without clear cause

5. Social Changes

- Withdrawal from social interactions.
- Difficulty maintaining relationships.
- Decreased performance at work or school.
- Avoidance of once-enjoyable activities.

6. Substance Use:

- Increased reliance on alcohol or drugs.
- Using substances to cope.
- Neglecting responsibilities due to substance use.

7. Expressed Concerns:

- Verbalizing feelings of hopelessness.
- Seeking reassurance about worth or life's meaning.
- Feeling overwhelmed or trapped.

8. Physical Warning Signs:

- Neglecting personal hygiene.
- Observable changes in weight or appearance.
- Signs of self-harm, like cuts or bruises.

9. Impaired Functioning:

- Decline in overall functioning.
- Inability to meet daily responsibilities.

10. Unexplained Physical Symptoms:

- Complaining about vague physical symptoms.
- Frequent visits to healthcare providers without resolution.

It's important to note that these signs and symptoms can vary based on the individual and the specific mental health condition. Additionally, some people may hide their struggles, so being attentive to subtle changes and open communication is key. If you notice concerning signs, approach your friend or family member with empathy and offer support. Encourage them to seek professional help from a mental health professional, counsellor, or therapist.