



BRIGHTENING THE WINTER BLUES: EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES TO COMBAT SEASONAL DEPRESSION

by: Emma Anwar



As the days shorten and temperatures drop, many people may feel less energetic, a bit moody, and sometimes downright depressed. This form of mood fluctuation, commonly known as *Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)*, typically strikes during the late fall and continues through the winter months. Understanding and addressing SAD is crucial, as it affects a significant portion of the population annually.

Seasonal Affective Disorder also known as seasonal depression manifests through various symptoms such as persistent low mood, loss of interest in previously enjoyable activities, increased sleepiness, changes in appetite or weight, feelings of sluggishness or agitation, difficulty concentrating, and in severe cases, thoughts of death or suicide. These symptoms can be attributed to reduced sunlight in the winter, which can lead to a drop in serotonin (a neurotransmitter that affects mood), and the disruption of the body's internal clock, both of which create an imbalance in melatonin levels, impacting sleep patterns and mood. Although reduced sunlight significantly affects an individual's mood and behaviour, the good news is that there are free and affordable strategies to manage these symptoms.

Strategies to Combat Seasonal Depression include:

1. **Light Therapy:** One of the primary treatments for SAD is light therapy. Light therapy boxes emit light that mimics sunshine and can stimulate the brain's chemicals linked to mood and sleep, easing SAD symptoms. When using a light therapy box, it's essential to choose one with an exposure to 10,000 lux of light and to use it for about 20-30 minutes each morning.

2. **Vitamin D Supplementation:** There's some evidence to suggest that a lack of sunlight might reduce the body's vitamin D levels, which may contribute to symptoms of SAD. Supplementing the body with vitamin D could help improve mood, however, it's important to consult a doctor for the appropriate dosage.

3. **Regular Exercise and Outdoor Activities:** Physical activity can boost serotonin, endorphins, and other feel-good brain chemicals. Something as simple as a walk outside during daylight hours can be beneficial. Furthermore, regular exercise, especially aerobic exercise, can effectively combat the symptoms of SAD.

4. **Healthy Diet:** Eating a balanced diet can help maintain energy levels and overall health. Foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids, like salmon, and folic acid, like spinach, could help ease the symptoms of depression.

5. **Mind-Body Techniques:** Practices such as yoga, meditation, and mindfulness can reduce stress and improve feelings of well-being. These practices help in creating a balance between the mind and body which is essential for good mental health.

6. **Social Support and Interaction:** Maintaining social connections is vital in the winter. Social interaction can boost feelings of happiness and belonging. Support groups or therapy groups for those with SAD can also be beneficial.

7. **Medication:** For those with severe SAD, antidepressant medication might be prescribed. For example, Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs) are commonly used to treat SAD, however, it's crucial before taking any medications to discuss the options and side effects with a healthcare provider.

In conclusion, Seasonal Affective Disorder is a real and treatable condition. While the winter months can be challenging for many, there are effective strategies to manage and mitigate the symptoms of SAD. Recognizing the symptoms early and taking proactive steps toward wellness is important. If you or someone you know is struggling with SAD/ seasonal depression, remember that help is available and recovery is possible! Prioritizing self-care and seeking professional help are key steps in overcoming the winter blues.



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR FINALS SEASON

By Victoria Ceolin



Hi Mustangs!

I hope your December is progressing smoothly! As the demands of coursework increase and finals season approaches, finding time for physical activity can become challenging. Balancing assignments, presentations, and other coursework can make it feel like there's never enough time. While spending several hours sitting may seem productive, it may not always be the best approach. Instead, prioritizing daily physical activity is the better option as it can enhance productivity by sharpening focus, improving sleep, and boosting creativity. With this being said, below are some ways to include movement in your daily December routine.

Use a Whiteboard & Pace Around

Handwriting is known for strengthening neural pathways that support learning. To harness this benefit, jot down the concepts you wish to memorize on a whiteboard mounted on a wall or use a blank sheet of paper if a whiteboard is unavailable. Then, as if teaching a class, recite or read the information out loud while standing and or moving around. Finally, proceed to a pace while reciting until you feel confident in your understanding. By doing this, studies have shown, that reciting concepts while moving around can significantly benefit alertness and information recall. Ultimately, this combination of physical activity and visual reinforcement can lead to remarkable results in your learning journey.

Embrace Standing Desk

Research surrounding the effectiveness of standing desks indicates they have a positive impact on mental health and overall well-being. Additionally, they help prevent shoulder and back pain which is a side effect that often accompanies prolonged periods of sitting. Remember, if a standing desk is unavailable, you can always create your own using a counter!



Go For a Study Buddy Walk

Save time and enrich your study sessions by learning alongside a friend. While searching for study spots on campus, consider conversations on course concepts while walking. This not only incorporates physical activity into your daily routine but also facilitates exchanging ideas and perspectives.



Take Study Breaks

Last but not least, don't forget about your study breaks! Many students enjoy using the Pomodoro method, especially after a long day of classes. This technique involves taking a 5-minute study break after a focused 25-minute study block (or a 15-minute break following a 45-minute study block). Also, to incorporate movement into study breaks, you can try completing a few sets of your favourite bodyweight exercises. Whether it's arm circles or attempting a 5-minute plank, these exercises offer a cost-free, efficient, strength-building, and home-based mini workout. Alternatively, you may choose to do some stretching or go out for a nice walk during your study breaks.



Overall, incorporating movement into your study routine can be a game-changer for your physical and mental health as well as your academic success. I hope these tips inspire you to try incorporating movement and exercise into your study routine. Best of luck on your final exams and projects - you've got this!

THE HOLIDAY MOVIE WATCHLIST:

Festive Films to Brighten Your Season!

BY: AIDEN HUYNH

Season's greetings, Mustangs

As the holiday spirit fills the air, what better way to embrace the cozy vibes and spread some cheer than by indulging in heartwarming holiday movies? Take away the stress of school and watch some of the most classic holiday movies. Whether you're snuggled up by the fireplace or enjoying a hot cocoa with loved ones, here's a curated list of timeless classics and delightful new releases that will add that extra sparkle to your festive celebrations:

1. "It's a Wonderful Life" (1946)

A true holiday staple that has stood the test of time. Join George Bailey on a transformative journey guided by an angel, reminding us of life's true riches.

2. "Home Alone" (1990)

Laugh-out-loud fun meets the spirit of the season as young Kevin McCallister takes on bumbling burglars in this iconic family comedy.

3. "Love Actually" (2003)

A tapestry of interconnected love stories set during Christmas in London, this film beautifully captures the essence of love, family, and the magic of the holidays.

4. "The Polar Express" (2004)

Embark on a magical train ride to the North Pole in this enchanting animated adventure based on the beloved children's book by Chris Van Allsburg.

5. "Elf" (2003)

Get ready for laughter and joy as Buddy, a human raised at the North Pole, spreads holiday cheer in New York City in this modern classic starring Will Ferrell.

6. "The Holiday" (2006)

Escape to a charming English cottage and a lavish Los Angeles mansion in this heartwarming tale of love and self-discovery, perfect for the romantic at heart.

7. "A Christmas Carol" (multiple adaptations)

Charles Dickens' timeless tale of Ebenezer Scrooge's redemption has been adapted into various films over the years. Choose from classics like the 1951 version starring Alastair Sim or the more recent adaptations for a dose of holiday lessons and spirit.

8. "Klaus" (2019)

An animated gem that reimagines the origins of Santa Claus through a heartwarming story about friendship, generosity, and the power of kindness.

9. "The Grinch" (2002)

Whether you prefer the classic animated TV special or the more recent animated or live-action versions, Dr. Seuss' beloved tale about the grouchy Grinch and the spirit of Whoville is a must-watch.

10. "A Charlie Brown Christmas" (1965)

Join Charlie Brown and the Peanuts gang as they discover the true meaning of Christmas in this timeless animated classic.

This holiday season, cozy up, grab some popcorn, and let these movies fill your heart with warmth and joy. Whether you're a fan of heartfelt stories, comedy, or animated adventures, there's something for everyone in these timeless tales that capture the magic of this special time of year.

Wishing you a season filled with love, laughter, and endless movie magic, before second semester begins!

TOP MOVIES

For the Holidays

by: MAGGIE LI

THE MOST FESTIVE TIME OF YEAR IS SOON UPON US AND AFTER A GRUELLING FINALS SEASON IT'S TIME TO RELAX AND KICK BACK WITH SOME HOLIDAY MOVIES TO BEGIN YOUR WELL-DESERVED WINTER BREAK. A GREAT HOLIDAY MOVIE DOESN'T HAVE TO REVOLVE AROUND A BEARDED MAN IN A RED SUIT FOR IT TO BE AN ICONIC. HOLIDAY MOVIES RANGE FROM YOUR CORNY HALLMARK ROM-COMS TO THE ACTION PACKED DIE HARD SERIES AND BEYOND. DEPENDING ON YOUR MOOD FOR THE NIGHT. SO IN ORDER TO HELP ALLEVIATE THE STRUGGLE THIS ARTICLE PROVIDES A VARIETY OF GENRES OF HOLIDAY MOVIES FOR YOU AND YOUR LOVED ONES TO ENJOY THIS HOLIDAY SEASON.



Violent Night (2022)

If you're a fan of Home Alone and crime fighting, ass-kicking Santa Clauses, then Violent Night starring David Harbour is right up your alley. But be warned, this action packed film is not for the faint-hearted as it is bloody and gorey- violent, as the title suggests.



Love at First Sight (2023)

There's no better time for romcoms than under the glow of the Christmas tree with a cup of hot choco in hand and although this movie isn't holiday themed, this love story of finding your soulmate will definitely fill your soul with warmth just the same.



Ghost of Girlfriends Past (2009)

If you enjoyed Matthew McCoughney in How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days, then you'll for sure enjoy his Christmas romcom "Ghot of Girlfriends Past" which is yet another modern twist on the Charles Dicken's classic "A Christmas Carol". But rather than the ghosts of Christmas Past, Matthew McCoughney is plagued by the spirits of his ex girlfriends as a final shot of finding true love.

Scrooge: A Christmas Carol (2022)



This cartoon musical adaption adds a whimsical, and supernatural spin on the Christmas classical story of the Scrooge by Charles Dickens, making it a perfect film to watch with loved ones of all ages after Christmas dinner.

Bad Santa (2003) **BAD!**

It's not a perfect list of movie recommendations without a silly comedy film to lighten the mood and spread laughter. Fans of Die Hard and Home Alone will enjoy this comedy thriller about an annal holiday heist conducted by two conman posed as Santa and his trusty helper elf. However, things go askew when a young child thwarts their plans with his Christmas cheer.

