

Fighting the Winter Blahs



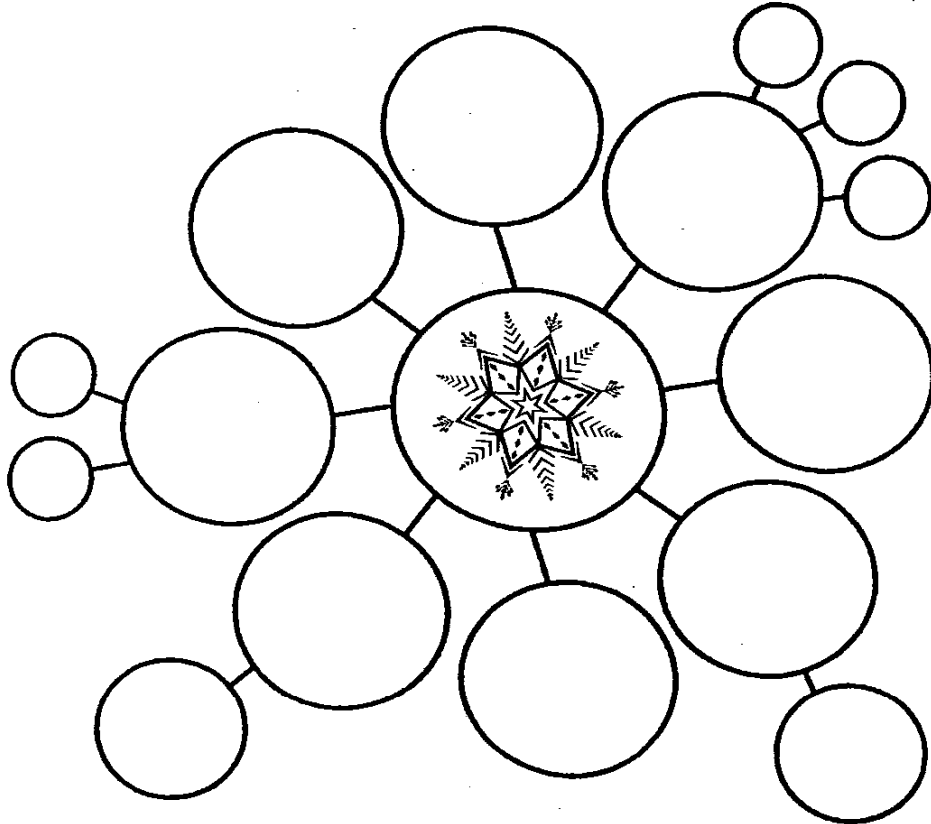
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MEMBER MATERIALS

Presented by:
Annette Larie
Family Living Program Assistant
Winnebago County
October 1998

Satellite Decisions

Think about a decision you need to make soon. Fill in the diagram, including any satellite decisions. Write your major decision in the large center circle. Write the satellite decisions in the surrounding circles. Add circles if you need to do so.



PAGE 1

From: Etta Mae Westbrook, Associate Professor,
Agricultural Extension Service, University of Tennessee.

Warning Signs of Cabin Fever

The research done on the phenomena of cabin fever in such places as Alaska, Greenland, and Norway routinely describes six symptoms as commonly being associated with cabin fever:

BEING LESS ACTIVE

Many people lower their pace of daily activity following the holiday season and thus find themselves bored with their limited range of activities by mid-winter.

CHANGES IN SLEEP PATTERNS

Cabin fever can effect sleep patterns in either extreme. The individual can try to sleep his winter away to escape the environment or, on the other hand, can suffer from insomnia rising hours earlier than he or she has to without being able to return to sleep.

IRRITABILITY

The individual with cabin fever can be a real bear. Forced to change patterns in daily lifestyles, many individuals respond with anger and hostility to those around them.

FEELING TRAPPED/POWERLESS

Feeling powerless to change their environment, many people also feel powerless to control other aspects of their lives.

WITHDRAWAL FROM OTHERS

Much of the isolation of winter is self-imposed. Despite needing compassion from others, many people retreat to their homes and reduce their social outlets.

FEELING BLAAH

Any combination of the above symptoms can cause boredom, lower self-image, and "blues."

FROM: PREVENTING CABIN FEVER BY DAVID BAST, AREA HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICE EDUCATION AGENT UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-EXTENSION, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN SYSTEM 1981

SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER

Information On Depression

The National Mental Health Association prepared this factsheet to provide basic information on seasonal affective disorder (SAD) for recently diagnosed patients and their families, or for those who suspect someone they know may have seasonal affective disorder. Please feel free to photocopy it and share it with others.

Seasonal affective disorder is a form of depression with symptoms that occur during the winter months, usually going into remission during the spring and summer. Although it was first noted before 1845, it has only received wide public attention in the last decade or so.

Causes

It has long been known that sunlight, as it peaks and ebbs over the year, affects many animals' seasonal activities, such as hibernation or reproductive cycles. Apparently, humans are no exception.

Researchers have tied SAD to melatonin, a sleep-related hormone that the human pineal gland produces and releases in the dark. Production of the hormone seems particularly active during winter, when the days are shorter and darker.

In 1980, a researcher named Dr. Alfred Lewy discovered that very bright light blocks the release of melatonin in people—and relieves winter depression. Patients generally respond to bright light therapy within four days of starting treatment—relapsing within four days after stopping the therapy.

Because so many people respond to bright light treatment, it's assumed that light has an antidepressant effect, and there have been no research findings to indicate anything to the contrary. A definite link between the patient's response and the way light affects melatonin, however, has not yet been established.

The disorder usually begins in early adulthood, and four times as many women as men are affected. For most people with SAD, January and February are the worst months.

Symptoms

The symptoms for SAD are rather specific to avoid misdiagnosis for other depressive disorders:

- regularly occurring symptoms of depression (sad, anxious or "empty" moods; decreased energy and interest, etc.) during the fall/winter months of at least three different years—two of them consecutively;
- at least three times as many instances of depression within a two-month time frame as during other times of the year;
- no other factors that could account for regular changes of mood (become unemployed every winter, etc.);
- excessive eating and sleeping; weight gain.

Treatment

Phototherapy (light treatment, or therapy) has been effective in relieving SAD. Patients are seated three feet away from a full-spectrum fluorescent light (about 12 times brighter than ordinary room light) and asked to glance at it about once a minute. The only side effects it seems to cause are occasional eyestrain and headaches.

For information on the resources available in your community, call

For more information, contact the NMHA Information Center, 1021 Prince Street, Alexandria, VA 22314-2971, (800) 969-NMHA

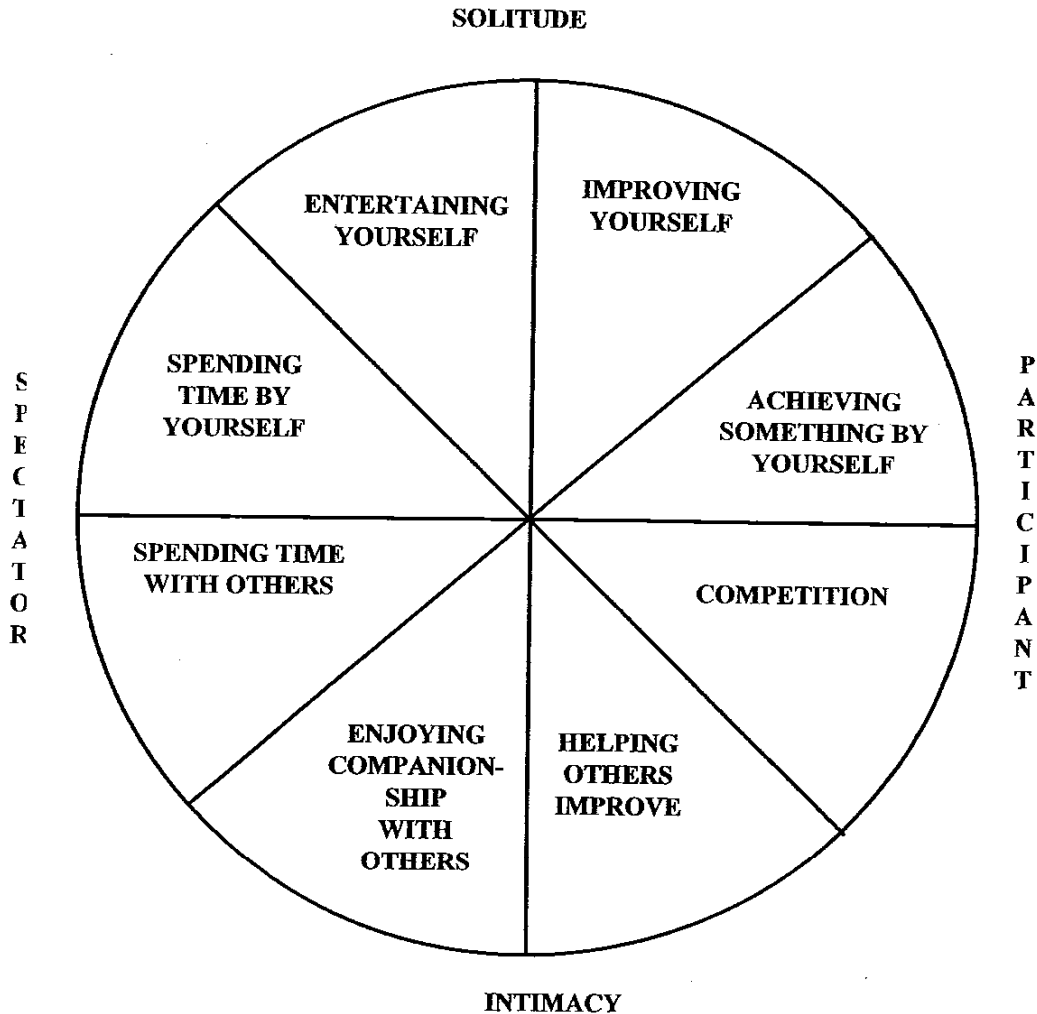


Author Richard Bolles, in his book Three Boxes of Life (Ten Speed Press, 1978), makes the point that many of us have limited ourselves not only to too narrow a range of interests but also to too narrow a focus within those chosen interests.

On the next page is a pie graph adapted from Bolle's book. This "pie" can be divided in several different ways. For example:

- The four sections to the top are things that can be done alone, by ourselves in times of solitude.
- The lower four sections are activities that require contact with at least one other person.
- The four sections on the left side of the "pie" require a low level of commitment and involvement on our part.
- The four sections to the right require active involvement and participation on our part.

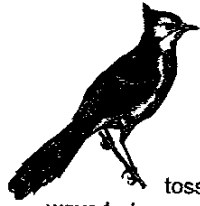
If we have limited our interests to only one or two sections of the pie, say television (killing time by yourself--or with others) and competition, it is easier to become bored than if we actively practice doing activities from all eight areas.



WINTER BLAHS BUSTERS

1. Light candles*
2. Listen to mood music*
3. Make your home smell good*
4. Add some color to your...home...clothing...you
5. Find at least one thing you enjoy about winter and do it!!!
6. Host or attend a Cabin Fever Party
7. Read
8. Write
9. Dream/Contemplate /Guided Imagery
10. Make a winter scrapbook. Recollections of past winter stories will be a great compliment.
11. Look at and organize old photos
12. Clean a drawer or closet. New shelf paper and drawer liner anyone?
13. Get a physical. Follow up with health recommendations.
14. Stock up on medical supplies as needed for house, car, purse(kleenex, cough drops etc)
15. Volunteer!
16. See something through the eyes of someone else. How does it look?
17. Smile-Be positive

-
18. Do your nails
 19. New hairdo?
 20. Eat well balanced meals at regular intervals
 21. Appreciate the here and now
 22. Complete something you've been meaning to do
 23. Update your address book
 24. Shopping?
 25. Let the sunshine in
 26. Get one thing (or 2) done each day
 27. Commit yourself to getting outside regularly. Even a brief walk to the mailbox is invigorating. Bundle Up
 28. Have a Hawaiian Luau
 29. Physical activity
 30. Sort through off season clothing
 31. Recycle your Christmas Tree* (Member Packet page 8)
 32. Feed the Birds* (Member Packet Page 9)
 33. Relaxation/Deep Breathing (Member Packet Page 10)
 34. Indoor Gardening/Bulbs* (Member Packet Pages 11-12)



Feed the Birds

There's a lot more to taking care of the birds than simply tossing birdseed onto the ground or into a feeder. Here are two ways to turn your bird feeding into creative fun. If pine trees grow in your area, spread peanut butter on a pine cone and then roll it in birdseed. Affix a string to the cone, and hang it from a tree or hook near your window.

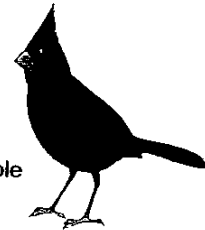
Still another approach is to make a "suet bell." Save the drippings from meat and mix them with twice as much bird seed and bread crumbs. Now punch a hole in the bottom of a yogurt container and insert a string, leaving about a foot coming out of the hole in each direction. While holding the string so it doesn't coil, pour in the mixture and let it solidify. When it has fully cooled and hardened, slide the yogurt container off and hang your fresh suet bell from a tree. Nature will do the rest.

Whatever you do, the birds in your neighborhood will appreciate the meal.

Easy Bird Feeder

You will get a kick out of seeing birds dine in the backyard-especially out of a homemade feeder!

Close and staple together the sides of the spout of a half-gallon milk container. Seal the hole top edge with tape, and then punch a small hole about a quarter of an inch from the top. Place a wire or pipe cleaner ring through the hole.



Set the carton upright, then cut two small holes about an inch and a half from the bottom on opposite sides. Poke a chopstick or unsharpened pencil through the holes, so it sticks out on both sides. This is the perch. One-half inch above the perch on each side, cut a two-inch-square flap that swings up. Fasten the flap in the open position with a wire or pipe cleaner.

Use a funnel to pour birdseed into the flap opening. (You can get birdseed at your local garden or hardware store; if you have a favorite local bird, go to the library and learn what kind of feed it likes best.) Hang the bird feeder by attaching a wire from the loop in the top of the feeder to a tree branch.

Remember: When you invite birds to a backyard feeding party, they'll expect season tickets!

Relaxation Through Breathing

Have you ever experienced dry mouth, sweaty palms, racing heart and a sinking stomach feeling that can pop up when you're especially anxious – you won't get that job, you'll be mute in a meeting, you'll trip on the way to the podium. Once such a pattern of thinking has been set in motion, it's hard to stop.

One-track thinking works to your advantage when there is an emergency, but in situations that are only mentally threatening, this type of thinking becomes a trap: your mind reads physical anxiety symptoms as threats which make physical reactions even worse. Back and forth the mind and body signals go, until you feel close to panic. The best way to break this cycle is to focus on your breathing, not your anxiety. Learn to change your breathing from tension-creating to relaxing-producing, which is an effective way to combat stress.

Diaphragm Breathing: Relaxed Breathing

The diaphragm is a large sheet of muscle shaped like an inverted bowl that's located under the lungs, separating the chest from the abdomen. During inhalation, the diaphragm flattens out, pulling air into the lungs. As it does this, it pushes down on the organs of the abdominal cavity, expanding the abdomen. The lungs fill from the bottom up.

Exhalation is nothing more than letting go: the diaphragm pops up into its relaxed position, pushing the air out of the lungs; the stomach then flattens out. With diaphragm breathing your rate of breathing (breaths per minute) slows down.

Chest Breathing: Tense Breathing

We tend to think of an ideal posture as a puffed out chest and flat stomach. This is the exact opposite of what our body's need for proper breathing. If you hold your stomach in or force it in with tight belts or clothes, you effectively freeze your diaphragm, making abdominal breathing impossible. The way to a trim stomach is through diet and exercise, not by holding your breath. In fact, using your abdominal muscles for breathing will actually flatten out the abdomen.

If you hold your abdomen rigid, you can breathe only through your upper chest. The typical chest breath moves just about a cupful of air. A full abdominal breath moves eight to ten times that much! With chest breathing, you're breathing rate increases.

Diaphragm Breathing to Combat Fatigue

Deep, diaphragm breathing can be used to combat fatigue. With diaphragm breathing more oxygen is supplied to the body organs. The brain has one of the greatest demands for oxygen and with the use of diaphragm breathing an individual will supply more oxygen to the brain and experience an immediate increase in the level of alertness.

Technique for Diaphragm Breathing

1. Sit upright in a straight-back chair with shoulders back. You may want to slide forward a few inches so that you are slightly reclining. Put a pillow behind your lower back if you like. Place one hand palm down across the sternum and one hand palm down on the abdomen. Close your eyes and monitor your breathing. Notice whether your abdomen rises and falls. If it does, you are breathing with the diaphragm. If not, you are chest breathing.
2. Take a deep breath in through your nose and exhale through your mouth using pursed lips. Breathe out with a sign of relief. Notice how during the inhalation your abdomen expands and how it flattens out as you exhale. You can think of "fresh air coming in and stale air going out."

The trick to shifting from chest breathing to abdominal breathing is to exhale completely for just one breath. Exhaling once through the mouth empties the lungs completely, and the resulting vacuum automatically pulls in deep, diaphragmatic breath. Once you get the hang of it, two or three minutes of abdominal breathing will provide a real timeout from tension. Even two to three breaths can make a difference!

Adapted from Minding the Body, Mending the Mind by Joan Borysenko, Ph.D.

Source: Mercy Medical Center – Occupational Therapy Department.

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INFOSOURCE 356
HEADING: GARDEN & LANDSCAPE
SUBHEADING: HOLIDAY & GIFT PLANTS

Agriculture TITLE: BULBS: PLANTING TULIPS, ETC. INDOORS
SPECIALIST OR AUTHOR: KALB
AREA: AGRICULTURE (horticulture)
Home and Family Living INTRO TO INFOSOURCE: 1991
LAST REVIEWED: 1995, MORRISEY
REVISED: NO

Parenting
The First Year

You don't need to wait until spring to enjoy the beauty of tulips and other spring-flowering bulbs. You can force these bulbs into bloom and enjoy their beauty indoors during winter.

Our
Environment

The most common bulbs for forcing include tulip, daffodil, hyacinth and crocus. Snowdrops, Dutch and reticulate iris, Star-of-Bethlehem, and grape hyacinth will also bloom readily.

Garden and Landscape

Only the highest quality bulbs will work when forcing bulbs. Look for bulbs that are specially labeled for forcing or for exhibition purposes.

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Home

Pot up bulbs in bulb pans or other fairly shallow containers. Bulb pans are about half as high as they are wide, and they are less likely to tip over than standard pots.

Plant the bulbs in a well-drained soil. You don't need to fertilize the bulbs since they already have food stored up in their bulbs. But you can add a dusting of bonemeal if you wish to encourage strong root development.

Partially fill the pots with soil and then set the bulbs close together in the pot. Fill it with more soil so that the tips of the bulbs are just slightly above the soil surface, which itself should be 1/2 to 1 inch below the lip of the pot.

If you use clay pots, soak them overnight so that they don't draw water away from the soil.

For a dramatic colorful display it is usually best to place several bulbs of a single variety in each pot. Generally six tulip, six daffodil, three hyacinth or fifteen crocus bulbs will fit into a six or seven inch pot. Hyacinths, with their attractive large blooms, are sometimes planted individually in four inch pots.

Some bulbs, including tulips, are asymmetrical, having a curved side and a flat side. The first and largest of the leaves grow from the flat side so place this side of the bulbs against the outer rim of the pot. In this way the large leaves will arch over the rim of the pot, giving you an attractive potted plant.

Label each pot with the variety, date of planting, and the date you plan on bringing it out of its cold treatment.

The bulbs need to be kept at around 40 degrees F; they cannot dry out or freeze. A cool cellar is good place for forcing potted bulbs. A refrigerator is an ideal location if you have the space. Outdoors, an uncovered coldframe or window well that is heavily mulched will work. Whatever the location, be sure to check the soil weekly and make sure that it doesn't dry out. Pots can be placed into perforated plastic bags to reduce moisture loss.

Many gardeners dig a bulb trench outside. Dig the trench so that it is six inches wider than the pots and at least one foot deep. Line the bottom of the trench with one inch of gravel or straw so that the pots won't freeze to the ground. Then set the pots in the trench and bury them with sand so that they are covered with a few inches of the material. Refill the remainder of the trench with soil.

Before the ground freezes, cover the trench with at least one foot of

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Before the ground freezes, cover the trench with at least one foot of dry shredded leaves and insulate the bulbs. If you suspect mice problems, top the trench with a 1/4 inch wire mesh screening material before mulching.

These pots in the trench will soon develop roots. Water the trench regularly if the weather is dry.

After 14-15 weeks you can begin taking the pots out of their cold treatment. For example, pots planted on October 1 can be brought indoors around Christmas. Most people take out only a few pots per week so that they can enjoy the blooms over an extended period.

Once the bulbs are brought indoors they take about three to four weeks to bloom. Start the plants off in a cool, 50-60 degrees F windowsill with bright, but indirect light. Once the shoots are about four inches tall, place the plants into a warmer location with direct sunlight until the flower buds begin to show color. If you want to target blooming for a specific date you can temporarily slow down the growth of plants by setting them in a cool location with indirect light.

Once flower blooms begin to show, a relatively cool location with indirect light will prolong the life of the blooms.

Usually the bulbs are discarded after they are done blooming since they rarely develop satisfactory blooms again. If you want to save your bulbs, remove the faded flower stalk and keep the foliage in a sunny location. The green foliage will produce food that will be stored in the bulb. Over time, the leaves will turn yellow and dieback. Cut back on watering while the foliage yellows, so as only to prevent the plant from withering. Store the bulbs, in or out of their pots, in a cool dry location until fall planting.

Some bulbs can be forced into bloom without cooling. These include paper-white narcissus, its yellow variety Soleil d'Or, and the Chinese sacred lily. Fill a decorative container to within one inch of its top with pebbles, gravel, coarse sand or pearl chips. Add water until it is barely below the surface of the pebbles.

Set the bulbs on top, holding them in place with enough pebbles to cover the bottom one-fourth of the bulbs. Place the bulbs in a cool 50-60 degree F, dim location for two to three weeks as their roots begin to develop. Gradually introduce the bulbs to increasing levels of sunlight until they begin to bloom, when they should receive indirect light. Carefully maintain the water level so that it stays just below the bulbs. Bulbs are discarded after blooming.

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HOW TO...

Get Your Car Ready For Winter

By Jack's Lake-Aire Auto Service, Lo-Buc Auto Repair, Lynn's Service Center

Eight Cold-Weather Car Care Checks

Record-breaking winter temperatures can leave you with enough car repairs to break your bank account. That's why it's no time to let simple, preventive car maintenance procedures fly south with the birds. Consider these tips for a smooth ride this winter:

SHOCKS & STRUTS

Alternate freezing and thawing can produce hazardous driving conditions - such as potholes. Even the most precise drivers can barely escape a whole winter without a single damaged tire or broken spring, but sometimes the jolt from the one you couldn't dodge can be very expensive. The loss of a muffler and sometimes the pipes that go with it can be prevented by regularly inspecting the undercarriage. If you survive a pothole, let an expert do an alignment check to assess any damage that may have occurred to shock absorbers, struts and other suspension parts.

TIRES

When outside temperatures begin to

drop, tires should be checked at least once a month, since cold weather reduces your tire's inflation pressure. Driving underinflated tires causes tire tread to wear faster and unevenly, and it can reduce ride performance, affect vehicle handling and decrease your vehicle's fuel efficiency.

Another good habit to continue throughout the season is to check your tires for uneven wear patterns. Uneven wear may signal improper inflation pressure, misalignment, tire and wheel imbalance or suspension problems.

If your vehicle becomes stuck on ice, you should avoid spinning the tires, as the force created from this action can literally rip tires apart.

BRAKES

Don't gamble with your brakes; they could save your life. Your braking system, probably the most critical safety system on your car, should be checked periodically this winter. It'll be like buying yourself some peace of mind!

ENGINE

A severe winter could mean millions of cars failing to start.

Excessive exhaust emissions and a polluted atmosphere can dull a picturesque snowfall, and misfiring, knocking and ping-pong is never pretty. Before a "no-start" ruins your day, start out this fall with a well-tuned car.

Oil

Change your engine oil and filter every 3,000 miles (or as specified in your owner's manual) if you do lots of stop-and-go driving, carry heavy loads or drive long distances this fall and winter.

BELTS AND HOSES

When one needs replacing, you're likely to find more in marginal condition.

Rubber components under the hood exist in a hostile environment, surviving sub-zero temperatures in the winter.

Hoses circulate as much as 7,500 gallons of coolant per hour at up to 18 pounds of pressure - and warrant periodic attention. Failure to maintain your cooling system by flushing and refilling every 24 months with fresh antifreeze can cause freeze-up, over-heating and rust and corrosion buildup.

BATTERIES

Batteries lose their charge over time, especially in cold weather, and cable connections can corrode. A certified technician can test the strength of your battery's charge.

PAINT JOB

Don't ignore bumps, scrapes, scratches and dings this fall. As winter sub-zero freezes set in, the damage is likely to get worse as rusting sets in.

Don't delay! Fall's already here and winter's on its way!



Winter Driving Car Kit Content Suggestions

- * Winter clothing/apparel (jackets, pants or 1 piece snowsuit, boots, hats, scarf
Mittens or glasses, socks)
- * Scaper/Brush
- * Blanket
- * Cell phone and emergency phone numbers
- * First Aid kit – make or buy
- * Jumper cables
- * Tow strap or line
- * Sand or gravel
- * Shovel
- * Flashlight
- * Flares
- * Heat or other isopropyl alcohol product to prevent gas line freeze
- * Packaged high energy food items



Source: Winnebago County Sheriff's Office
Steve Herman, Crime Prevention Officer



WINTER EMERGENCY ROAD GUIDELINES

- ❖ Obtain Winter tune-up for your vehicles (see attached)
- ❖ Stay on main roads
- ❖ Check weather forecast and adhere to advisories
- ❖ Tell someone of your route and anticipated arrival time
- ❖ Stay with vehicle in case of a breakdown if possible.
- ❖ Be cautious of strangers who stop to help. Ask them to call 911 if desired.
- ❖ Equip vehicle and utilize contents to stay warm or to walk for help if necessary. (Note: if car is kept running – keep windows open to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.)



Source: *Winnebago County Sheriffs Department –
Steve Herman, Crime Prevention Officer*

Fall Gardening Basics - Three Easy Steps For A Beautiful Spring Garden

Winter may be on its way, but don't put away those garden tools just yet. October is one of the busiest months in the garden and a critical time for green thumbs to lay the foundation for a gorgeous display of spring blossoms. Everything you do now to freshen plants and flowers will directly improve their appearance next spring.

Your fall gardening chores can be organized into three easy steps: planting trees and shrubs, planting bulbs, and yard and garden cleanup," says Mike Mitchell, a nursery manager at The Home Depot. "Autumn is the best time to plant shrubs, trees and flowering bulbs. It's also a great time to give your garden a thorough cleaning - not the most enjoyable aspect of gardening, but essential for a good spring growing season."

Planting Trees And Shrubs

Don't wait until spring to plant new trees and shrubs. Put them in the ground now to give them a head start. Come spring, you'll have a garden that's in full swing.

When selecting a new tree or shrub, do your research. Consult nursery personnel to determine how large the tree or shrub will be at maturity. A little forethought will insure your selection won't outgrow the space in a few years. Also learn about the plant's root system, water requirements, growing habits and seasonal changes.

When planting a new tree or shrub in the fall, be sure to protect it against winter's harsh elements. Adding a little mulch around the stem will protect new plants' tender root systems from winter winds. This also works well with rose bushes, nubs, clematis vines, most small fruit trees and shrubs and any sensitive perennials. Autumn is also a good time to cut back and prune deciduous shrubs and



ears. Fall pruning puts less stress on the plant's systems and enables it to heal easier.

Planting Bulbs

A bright, cold winter, spring bulbs are a welcome blast of color and well worth the effort of a fall planting. Bulbs such as tulips, daffodils and hyacinths require a period of extreme cold to stimulate their growth, and must be put in the ground in the fall. To preserve the enduring beauty of your garden, plant at least several new bulbs each year. Some bulbs stop blooming after a few years and others get damaged by rot or wild animals.

When planting bulbs, there is really only one rule to follow: duplicate the way plants grow naturally. Loose, informal groupings are much more attractive than awkward, artificial plantings in straight lines or other geometric patterns. Don't worry about planting too many bulbs; just be sure you remember what's already been planted so older bulbs aren't damaged as new ones are added.

Cleanup And Composting

Cleaning up the yard may not be as

tract rodents - there's not much that you can't use to make compost. Items that qualify include leaves, grass clippings, straw, sawdust, kitchen vegetable scraps and weeds (as long as they haven't gone to seed).

Compost piles are built by alternating layers of carbon- or "brown materials" such as straw and leaves, with nitrogen- or "green materials," such as grass clippings and kitchen scraps, with a small layer of soil in between. Add water as you put the ingredients in, but don't overdo it. Your compost pile should have the moisture content of a wrung-out sponge. Mix it in with your garden soil, spread it as mulch around vegetables or let a bucket of it seep in water and use the water as fertilizer.

Final Thoughts

Remember that all the work done this fall can result in a healthy, colorful garden next spring. For the many gardening enthusiasts in the north-west, it is well worth the effort.

Mike Mitchell is the Nursery Manager at the Federal Way Home Depot.

Home Energy Resources

Wisconsin Public Service

(insert your local service phone numbers and address)

Wisconsin Power and Light Company

(phone number and address)

Other local energy service company:

(list names, phone numbers, and addresses)

Local heating and cooling contractors:

(list names, phone numbers, and addresses)

Fighting the Winter Blahs



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LEADER MATERIALS

Presented by:
Annette Larie
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Winnebago County
October 1998

What to Say

What to Do

INTRODUCTION

As the days get shorter, the temperatures drop and the holiday's arrive, winter is fast approaching. Many of us look for ways to adapt our lives to this season...ways to fight the Winter Blahs.

Let's think about some strategies for winter living. Sometimes a good way to make decisions is to start with a few basic themes and then branch out. The satellite format helps to accomplish this, as well as to create a mental image and gets us to think.

The focus and objectives of today's lesson are:

1. Define the Winter Blahs. Distinguish between "Seasonal Affective Disorder: (SAD) and Winter Blahs and look at the causes.
2. Examine the effects of winter blahs, and discuss strategies for personal growth and enjoyment rather than enduring the winter months.
3. Review information and resources to prepare for winter weather/emergencies.

Satellite Decisions Activity
(Complete as a group)
Member Packet Page 1

What to Say

1. Do Winter Blahs, also referred to as Cabin Fever, Winter Doldrums, Winter Blues, etc. really exist?

These terms have a familiar ring, especially to those who live in the snow-belt areas. Although the winter blahs are common it should not be confused with Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). SAD is a form of depression, which requires intervention and treatment and affects 6% of the U.S. population.

The symptoms between the two are similar and some or all may occur temporarily from time to time in all of us. It is important to note that with SAD the symptoms are rather specific and key is their persistence and interference with the ability to function on a daily basis. In addition to the symptoms listed for SAD, others may include changes in sleep patterns, decreased sex drive and hopelessness.

The mechanisms causing SAD and Winter Blues are not yet well understood, however, much of the research done links a reduction in light as a major contributing factor. It has been suggested that internal rhythms (Circannual rhythms) that cause physiological or behavioral events to recur annually in wild animals is applicable to seasonal changes that occur in human beings, particularly the response to varying light levels throughout the year. The secretion of Melatonin, a hormone produced by a pea-sized gland tucked underneath the brain is released into the bloodstream at night and continues until dawn in animals. This discovery had led to experimentation with exposing SAD patients to increased bright light.

What to Do

Get Reactions

Warning Signs of Cabin Fever and fact Sheet on Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)
Member Packet
Pages 2 & 3

Discuss Individual Experiences

What to Say

Therapists with notable success have used light therapy. A Company called Northern Lights Technologies promises to bring the light of springtime into your home with a special light product they market for home use based on this theory. Bright Light is assumed to be an antidepressant and there has not been any research findings, thus far, to the contrary.

Cold and Isolation have also been linked to the causes of winter blahs. First, our senses are affected. Think, for example, about the effect different smells, sights, sounds, textures, tastes have on your feelings and moods. What about clothing you identify as comfortable or uncomfortable? How about pleasant or unpleasant smells? Second, our social self is affected. Other factors that may contribute toward negative feelings about winter include fear of injury, escalating heating bills, being snow bound, frozen pipes, etc.

What to Do

Light Experiment
Turn off lights and get reactions

Discussion

Group Sharing

What to Say

What to Do

II. Although Winter Blahs do not discriminate across age, gender, race, or geographical lines, some groups may be more susceptible such as:

1. Northern residents (although the blahs are present elsewhere as well due to shorter days)
2. Northern transients who become disenchanting with winter after the first few snowfalls.
3. women four times more likely than men.
4. People whose lives center around summer activities.
5. People going through numerous change and/or crises.
6. People especially susceptible to the cold and or people who are ill.
7. People in their 20's through their 40's.

The effects of cold, isolation, and inactivity take their toll on our minds and bodies.

What to Say

What to Do

Let's take a look at some suggestions for coping with.....

COLD

1. Don't hibernate-because people need excitement all year around; self-imposed activity can be more dangerous to one's health than braving the elements to be socially active.
2. Develop a positive mental attitude about winter-most of us live here by choice and it is a huge loss to write off 4-5 months of the year because of cold. Appreciate the change of season and develop the attitude to seize the moment, enjoy it while it's here, etc.
3. Enjoy the sunny days-taking outings on the many beautiful sunny days of winter may give hope for dealing with those bone-chilling days.

Discuss additional ways to cope with cold.

ISOLATION

1. Keep talking-share feelings with others.
2. Enjoying the experience of solitude-relaxation is becoming a lost art that is necessary for balanced living. Reflection is not hibernation as it's a conscious effort to slow down, be mellow and enjoy your own company.
3. Risk reaching out-seek companionship, telephone friends, write a letter. People need people especially important to remember during the technological age

Discuss additional ways to cope with isolation.

INACTIVITY

1. Remember that neither the environment nor the season is boring. Think about why you no longer do activities you enjoyed during the rest of the year. Ask yourself when was the last time I tried something new. What's going on in the community?
2. Try to reassess your views on what fun is.
3. Engage in a broad range of indoor, outdoor and community activities.
4. Do what you really want to do.

Discuss additional ways to cope with inactivity

Review Pie Graph
(Member Packet Page 4
and 5)

What to Say

Even a single interest can be given new zest by applying it in a variety of contexts. Take an interest in cooking for example. You can spend time by experimenting and creating alone in your kitchen. You could entertain yourself by fantasizing you are a great chef creating a masterpiece. You could improve your skill by watching other chefs, taking a class or reading a book on the subject. You could feel accomplishment by mastering a challenging dish. Or... you could spend time with others swapping recipes. You could enthusiastically share secrets and techniques with another who shares your interest. You could help each other improve your own skill. If competition is appealing to you, you may even enter a contest with your recipe.

Whatever the interest, using the ideas on the pie graph as a tool can help use and focus on that interest in several different ways. This is one way to thoroughly do what you want to do simply by applying a new perspective.

Also included in the Member Packet is a list of Blahs Busters. Additional resources have been provided for a few of the suggestions.

1)Recycle your Christmas Tree-from InfoSource. Page 8

2)Feed the Birds-two fun ideas from 365 TV Free Activities Page 9

3)Relaxation/Deep Breathing. Page 10

4)Indoor Gardening & Bulb. Page 11-12

Also to add to InfoSource ideas for recycling your Christmas Tree comes from Country Woman magazine, which suggests decorating your own and even your neighbors trees with other goodies such as apple, orange and pear strips, bagel halves, and bread. Popcorn and cranberry strings are also popular.

What to Do

Review "Blahs Busters"
Discuss as a group and add some of your own (**Member Packet Pages 6-12**)

What to Say

What to Do

III. Finally a word about winter preparations to consider. Getting ill, falling on an icy walk, or encountering a road or home emergency (particularly in Wisconsin Winter weather) can certainly add to our conjure up the blahs and frustration with winter.

What can you do to minimize these challenges?

1. See your doctor and follow up on recommendations for avoiding illness and other health advice. Exercise accordingly. Dress in layers. Wear treaded footwear.
2. Have winter service done on your car, and prepare an emergency kit for travel. Follow winter driving recommendations. Tip: To keep scraping to a minimum after parking, try cutting large garbage bags open and place over your windshield and inside the car doors, closing windows to secure. Simply remove and shake off.
3. Prepare your yard and garden for winter.
4. Keep sidewalks and driveways clear – salt. Keep overhangs free of hanging ice buildup.
5. Have a home maintenance check done on your home. Follow recommendations for fireplace, wood stove and furnace operation and care.
6. Are you prepared for a winter weather emergency?

(See Member Packet pages 13-15)

(See Member Packet Page 16)

(Give Resources for maintenance – Member Packet page 17)

Review guidelines for dealing with an energy emergency (Member Packet pages 18-20)

CONCLUSION

Today we talked about ideas for coping with the cold, darkness, inactivity and isolation that sometimes causes us to feel a little "Blah" during the winter months. Hopefully, we've come up with ways to get the most enjoyment possible during winter by relaxing some, socializing some, experiencing both solitude and camaraderie, as well as being prepared for the changes winter brings into our lives.

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