

Win over winter

Sleepy and Grumpy: merely the names of two of the Seven Dwarfs or good adjectives to describe you when the weather turns cold?

As the days shorten, the lack of sunlight affects our internal biological clocks and melatonin levels, leaving us susceptible to moodiness, daytime fatigue, anxiety and social withdrawal. If you know you're prone to such weather-induced dispositions, it's wise to plan for them.

"Prevention is better than a cure," says Norman E. Rosenthal, M.D., a clinical professor of psychiatry at Georgetown Medical School in Washington, D.C., and author of *Winter Blues* (Guilford Publications). He suggests using light boxes, as well as taking a morning walk to increase your light exposure and get some mood-boosting aerobic activity.

You can also try the following tips and tricks from the Scandinavians (many of whom get only about six hours of daylight per day in January):

Get snuggly » During poor weather, Swedish cafes set out colorful candles, blankets and even pillows to help customers feel at home, says Christina Johansson Robinowitz, a cross-cultural coach and author of *Modern Day Vikings* (Nicholas Brealey Publishing). It's a winter coping technique called *mysig* (loosely translated as "coziness") common in Scandinavia. So instead of hibernating solo, make *mysig* dates with friends to cocoon in blankets and watch movies or play games.

Be a water baby » It may sound extreme, but Finns jump out of a



Look to Scandinavian culture to avoid the cold-weather buzzkill.

hot sauna and roll in the snow or jump into cold water, such as a lake, to boost circulation and reinvigorate themselves. You can get the same effect by alternating three- to five-minute intervals of hot water and 30-second blasts of cool water in your shower, notes Warren Russell, a registered massage therapist at the Scandinave Spa in Whistler, British Columbia, Canada. (Pregnant women

or those with heart conditions should check with a doctor first.)

Light up » Candles are integral to *mysig* and create a welcoming environment, says Robinowitz, who notes many Swedish families even eat breakfast by candlelight during the winter. Give it a try and see how your own mood brightens. ✖

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