



Association pour la santé environnementale du Québec
Environmental Health Association of Québec

ECO-JOURNAL

February 2021

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February blues

How to care for yourself with health in mind

In December, the holidays keep us occupied, and in January, we enjoy the afterglow of the holidays. Then, February rolls around. Bitter temperatures and bleak grey skies can send us into a demoralizing mood that might last until the first spring flower bloom in March. This is also known as the *February blues*. Therefore, self-care is an important habit to incorporate daily into our lives to minimize the physical and mental health effects of the *blues*. Here are five tips that will help boost your self-care routine during the coming month.

Keep your body and mind busy

Being stuck inside for months on end can make us feel both discouraged and unproductive. When normal schedules are disrupted, it is easy to fall into unhelpful habits. It is thus important to have, on hand, a few distractions and/or fun projects to help us cope with these negative feelings. For instance, you can read a new book, execute a creative DIY initiative, clean out a cluttered closet or catch up on our favourite TV shows. Moreover, indoor exercise can help you *feel* better. Even with closed gyms during quarantine, thanks to YouTube, you can access a variety of exercise routines that will get your heart pumping in less than 20 minutes. Whether you are a yoga, aerobics, dance or fitness person, you will find the perfect daily workout at the comfort of your home!



Positive vibes only!

When we are caught in feelings of desperation, it is important to keep in mind that there is always something to smile and to be grateful about. In fact, gratitude is a quality that scholars, spiritual leaders and scientists throughout history have agreed upon. A great way to express it is by keeping a gratitude journal, in which you can write down three things you are grateful for every morning. This will frame your mindset for the rest of the day. Moreover, make sure to get your daily dose of laughter. The long-term effects are very numerous: an improved immune system, pain and tension relief and an enhanced mood. Go watch your favourite comedy movie or stand-up show, or listen to a funny podcast; whatever makes you laugh – go for it!

The more, the merrier!

Although winter months are often associated with cocooning activities at home, staying indoors for an extended period of time can often lead to feelings of isolation. Moreover, with the pandemic, the month of



February can feel even lonelier. Therefore, make sure to book time in your calendar to socialize with friends and family; whether it be for a wine and cheese night with colleagues via Zoom, an online board games night with friends, a walk to the park with a family member or simply a call to have updates from friends you haven't spoken to in a while. The main point here is to stay connected with others.

Sunshine? Yes, please!

Heading outdoors is one of the most reliable ways of improving seasonal depression. Not only does your body benefit from the exposure to natural light, but being in a natural setting has also been proven to decrease anxiety, rumination,



negative feelings, and even increase brain performance. This is also known as *ecotherapy*. Therefore, when going outside for a stroll, opt for the most scenic natural environment such as a park, a wilderness area, an urban green space

or a garden, and give up the busy streets. Your eyes, heart and mind will thank you for it!

Beat the blues, one citrus at a time!

One way to boost your energy level instantly is to add citrus to your diet. Although it may sound silly, what we eat has a direct impact on our mood and overall wellbeing. Moreover, the hearty comfort foods we enjoy during the winter season, including the indulgent holiday dinners, can weigh our body and energy levels down. By adding orange slices to your salad or zest of lemon in your glass of water, you can enhance the flavour with a touch of freshness and boost your immune system to help combat the flu. Moreover, citrus have a pleasing, fresh and uplifting smell due to their d-limonene component. Studies have found that this component supports the part of the nervous system that is responsible for relaxation, so cooking with citrus can actually reduce anxiety and uplift your mood!

