**Lacking Get-up-and-go?
*How to beat the winter blahs***

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Winter is here, with her cold, snow, freezing rain, and short daylight hours. If you are like me, I feel like going into my cave and hibernating until spring. But I am not a bear, and neither are you. When the blahs of winter seem to overcome you, here are some ideas to consider:

***Are you following a healthy lifestyle?***

A healthy lifestyle consists of many components, including eating healthfully, staying hydrated, exercising regularly, sleeping, personal hygiene, community, socialization, spiritual endeavors, and more. If any one of these factors is missing from your life, you may need to diligently and purposefully work on changing that.

**Healthful eating** includes having a balance of lean proteins, fruits and vegetables, bread and cereals, and milk and dairy products. Staying away from junk food and sugary snacks, and reading labels is a good idea to consider. It’s best not to skip meals, and breakfast is indeed the most important meal of the day. Drinking enough water (64 to 125 ounces per day) is also important for all your bodily systems to function. Dehydration is often the number one cause of feeling listless, and drinking enough water may be the only boost you need!

**Exercise** improves health and mood. The lack of exercise will lead to poor physical and mental health. In the winter, you can get enough exercise by going to the gym, running up and down your residence hall stairs for 20 minutes, or putting on your coat and boots and going outside for a walk. Going outside will also help with fresh air and vitamin D.

**Sleep** hygiene is important, as always. The proper amount of sleep varies from individual to individual, but the general recommendation is 7 to 9 hours per night. Be consistent with the number of hours you get. For example, if you do best on 8 hours, strive to consistently attain 8 hours every night. Make certain to wind down each night and keep a bedtime around 10:00 or 11:00 p.m.

You can tackle your **community, socialization and spiritual** needs all in one setting, by attending worship services regularly. People who keep themselves in isolation or ignore their spiritual health are more apt to develop depression.

***Are your symptoms more severe than usual?***

**Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)** runs rampant this time of year, but there is help. For more information, see my article on SAD: <https://community.hilbert.edu/2017/11/10/how-to-handle-the-dark-days-of-late-autumn-and-winter/>.

***Are you using your critical thinking skills?***

**Gaining perspective** by changing your environment is often helpful. Drive to the Botanical Gardens in Lackawanna, study in a different location, such as a local coffee shop, or visit Chestnut Ridge Park for a hike in the woods. Lake Erie, though usually frozen this time of year, is also a great destination. You never know what you will see there! ***Budget your time, so you can include fun in your schedule.***

**Pamper yourself**, especially if you have achieved a personal goal, such as doing well on a test, or resisting the temptation to skip your daily exercise. Pampering yourself could include anything that you like to do, like calling a friend, going to a movie, watching a sporting event, doing your nails, or anything else that takes your mind off feeling blah.

**Taking a break** from social media and going for a walk, visiting a friend, or reading a novel, are great ideas!

**Think about the future.** Spring will be here before you know it. There is light at the end of the tunnel. Give yourself positive self-talk, and tell yourself you will make it.

***For more ideas on beating the winter blahs, visit these Web Sites:***

WebMD depression quiz:
<http://www.webmd.com/depression/risk-developing-depression>

The Huffington Post:
<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/diane-passage/5-tips-on-beating-the-win_b_6581542.html>

World of Psychology:
<http://psychcentral.com/blog/archives/2012/12/03/5-ways-to-beat-the-winter-blahs/>

*If you read this article to the end, and you would like to enter the Hilbert College Wellness Center monthly drawing, stop by the Wellness Center between 11:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, or send me an email with a brief description of what you learned, at* *wellnesscenter@hilbert.edu**.*