



# Moving through the cold: Why it matters (even when it's hard)

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When winter sets in, everything feels slower. The mornings are darker, the wind bites, and the couch feels more inviting than ever. But here's the thing: movement doesn't need to be intense or outdoors to make a difference.

Even just a few stretches, a short walk around the house, or a kitchen dance can release feel-good hormones like endorphins and serotonin. This helps balance your mood, improve circulation, and boost your immune system which is especially helpful when you're trying to avoid winter bugs.

For those living with chronic illness, movement might look different. It might be slow, seated, or guided by energy levels. That's okay. The goal isn't to "push through pain" it's to reconnect with your body in a way that feels safe and manageable. Even gentle movements support lymphatic drainage, reduce joint stiffness, and help ease the feeling of being stuck or low.

## **Why do we get the winter blues?**

The winter blues are real! When we get less sunlight, it disrupts our body's natural rhythms. This affects melatonin (our sleep hormone) and serotonin (our mood hormone), which can lead to:

- Low energy
- Fatigue
- Mood swings
- Trouble sleeping
- Feeling down; or
- Unmotivated

This can hit even harder if you're also managing a chronic health condition. Cold weather can increase pain and inflammation, and it often makes it harder to stay connected, get fresh air, or follow your usual routines.

Then comes flu season, which raises health risks especially for those who are immunocompromised. So, looking after your emotional and mental health is just as important as staying warm.

## **Light therapy: A simple way to support your mood**

What is light therapy and why try it? Light therapy is a simple and proven way to support your mood and energy levels in winter.

When we don't get enough sunlight, it affects our body clock, sleep, and mood. Light therapy uses a special light box (10,000 lux) that mimics natural daylight. Sitting near it for 20–30 minutes in the morning helps:

- Reset your body clock
- Improve sleep and focus
- Increase serotonin (the “feel good” hormone)
- Lift mood and energy

It's especially helpful for people with Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) or winter blues and research show that up to 80% of people feel better after using light therapy regularly.

Think of it as sunshine in a box: a safe, natural way to help your body and brain feel more balanced during the darker months.

## **Staying motivated in the cold months:**

It's normal for motivation to dip during winter especially when pain, fatigue, or mental health challenges are in the mix. But routine and small actions can make a big difference.

Routine Anchors are simple daily habits that bring structure and calm – helping your body and mind feel steady and supported.

Some great examples include:

- Waking at the same time each day
- Enjoying a hot drink slowly, without distraction (mindfully)
- Doing a few gentle stretches after waking
- Moving around the house or walking outside briefly
- Practicing a breathing exercise like box breathing (inhale 4 – hold 4 – exhale 4 – hold 4)

Even one or two anchors can bring a sense of rhythm and stability to your day.

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**REACH OUT IF YOU NEED SUPPORT!**

**IF THINGS FEEL OVERWHELMING, DON'T HESITATE TO REACH  
OUT AND TALK TO SOMEONE YOU TRUST - SUPPORT IS  
ALWAYS WITHIN REACH.**

**YOU ARE NOT ALONE AND YOUR WELLBEING MATTERS.**