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## Healthy SELF

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# How the (Nasty) Weather Affects Your Mood

Monday, January 31, 2011 at 1:44 PM | posted by **Jenny Everett**

OK, this snow situation is getting to be comical. Another storm? Does Mother Nature have it out for us or something?

Not only does nasty winter weather ruin your leather boots, it can also mess with your mood. Whether you're PO'd from your commute or just missing the sunshine, here are some tips for finding your happy place when the weather has you feeling cold and gray.



According to Jacob Teitelbaum, M.D., a sleep and fatigue expert and author of *From Fatigued to Fantastic!*, levels of serotonin -- a feel-good chemical -- can dip in the winter, when we're exposed to less light throughout the day. For about 20 percent of people, the symptoms (tiredness, depression, etc.) can be severe enough to warrant an official diagnosis (Seasonal Affective Disorder, a.k.a SAD). But most women can handle with the winter blahs on their own. Here's how to deal:

**Get lit.** If you're holed up in an office most of the day, place a 10,000-lux light box ([here's a good one](#)) at a 45-degree angle to your face, about 18 inches away. Spend 30 to 45 minutes in front of the box every morning from September through May. And, in general, turn it on anytime you feel like you could use a light "fix." Imagine you're on the beach, taking the day off, feeling warm and sun-kissed.

**Know this:** Most studies show that winter's effect on mood is generally minimal. In other words, don't assume that you're going to be grumpy when the weather is foul.

**Goof off at work!** Here's a good excuse to watch a couple of funny YouTube videos on the job. Laughing can help brighten your mood, which may cause you to think more

 

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1. Chicken recipes

creatively, according to a study published last month in the journal *Psychological Science*. See, boss, watching *Funny or Die* is productive.

**Try yoga:** According to a new study published in *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*, yoga has a greater positive effect on mood and anxiety level than walking and other forms of exercise. Researchers speculate that this is because yoga has been show to increase the level of gamma-aminobutyric acid (a.k.a. GABA), a brain chemical that helps regulate nerve activity.

**Eat this mood food:** Studies show that leafy greens, like swiss chard, are high in magnesium, which has been shown to help women beat stress and squelch PMS. We love it mixed into pastas, soups and stews. [Yum!](#)

Most cases of SAD are reported in January and, as of a few weeks ago, the days started getting longer. Sunshine and warmth can't be far off!

Does winter weather give you the blues?

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