

BREAKING THE WINTER FUNK

A little change in perspective, while rejuvenating your body and mind in preparation for a healthy transition into spring.

You know how it is; winter sneaks in silently while you carry on as usual.

- Then suddenly you are grappling with news about the flu pandemic. Meanwhile, the approaching holiday season begins to demand most of your time and energy.
- As the holiday comes to its crashing finale there is no time to rest as the new year opens the door of hope and requires your efforts to get “back on track”.
- By mid-February the accumulated stress and colder darker days seem to have slowly drained you of energy and motivation. Winter funk takes a nice cozy seat in the chambers of your heart.
- “Blah”, is the only way to describe it.

Is it possible to get back some of my spunk without demanding more of my time, energy and money before the spring? Or, should I just hang on until then? ...Blah!

Naturally, low energy and motivation make more space and time for quiet, introverted reflection. Feelings of sadness and thoughts about unresolved issues in relationships to your health, family, friends and work may arise. In this way, the winter blues can be healing, but only if you give yourself space to have these thoughts and feelings. Perhaps understanding the winter blues as something more in alignment with what is right with you, than what is wrong with you will help.

A Refreshing Perspective:

From an Eastern Medicine point of view, winter with its cold and dark elements is YIN in nature. YIN carries within it the energetic quality of contraction, retreat, introversion, rest and receiving.

On the other hand, springtime with its brighter, warmer days is YANG in nature. YANG energy promotes outward movement seen in the growth of grasses, flowers and tree buds.



A Lesson From Nature:

A seedling resting in the cool dark earth, stores up energy (YIN) for the time when it will require an enormous effort upward and outward, growing into a beautiful plant and flower (YANG).

The point is:

You can't have YANG without YIN!

Spring is not spring without the resting, quiet, rejuvenating time of winter before it.

Looking at it this way then, it may not be "Blah" or the winter blues, which you are experiencing, but rather the energetic quality of YIN. YIN energy is as real in your body as it is in nature.

Taking some time to be okay in the quality of YIN, which is slower, sleepier and more reflective than YANG, may be exactly what you need to prepare for the more energetic spring season.

KEYS TO REJUVENATING YOUR BODY AND MIND IN PREPARATION FOR A HEALTHY TRANSITION INTO SPRING.

Moving easily from a predominantly yin state to a predominantly yang state.

NURTURING YIN:

- **Rest:** Take naps and sleep a little longer than usual if you can.
- **Reflect:** Journal and meditate about unresolved issues that you want to work toward resolving.
- **Rejuvenate:**
 - Breathe.
 - Read something you've wanted to but haven't yet because other obligations have kept you busy.
 - Pursue activities like Yoga and Tai Chi which rejuvenate your body and mind.
 - Eat healthy food (Yin foods include grains like brown rice, quinoa and millet).

Given that springtime is just around the corner, slowly but surely start to wake up more of your natural YANG energies, so that the coming spring isn't such a jolting transition.

NURTURING YANG:

Movement: If you are one to be out in the gardens at the first sign of spring it is especially important to start conditioning your muscles and joints now. Unconditioned muscles and joints are more prone to injury, resulting in limitations and frustration.

Sunshine and Fresh Air: Take advantage of the sunny days and be sure to get outside at least three times per week. Feel the sun on your face, breathe some fresh air and play a little or a lot!

Tips for Building Strength, Endurance, Balance and Coordination:

One Leg Stand:

1. Stand on one leg, starting out by supporting yourself with one hand on a table or wall.
 2. Work up to standing on one leg without support for one minute per day. Alternate legs.
- When you feel stronger repeat the one-minute leg stand 3 to 5 times. Do this once per week.
 - **Study:** Studies have shown the significant impact this simple task has on increasing bone density, muscle strength in the legs and hips, while reducing falls, fractures and injury due to better balance and coordination.

Longer Walks:

- Add 10-15 extra minutes on one of your walks per week.
- **Study:** Studies show that adding just a little extra time even one day per week to your regular walk, significantly improves endurance.

Faster Walking:

- Increase the intensity of your walking pace for 30 seconds to 1 minute (intensity = non-talking pace and hearing your breathing increase).

- Recover by walking easily for 1 to 2 minutes. Repeat the intensity interval 5 to 15 times. Do this 2 times per week.
- **Study:** Studies show that interval training, even twice per week, significantly improves overall fitness level, promotes better heart and lung function than regular strolling and increases human growth hormone, which promotes better muscle mass, memory, stamina and sleep quality.

Yoga and Tai Chi:

- These activities are excellent for improving the connections between the body and mind, improving coordination, balance and strength, while rejuvenating the whole system.

Follow these steps and you will be more successful at transitioning into spring, while feeling rested, rejuvenated, relaxed and ready to enjoy the coming season.

IF WE CAN LEARN TO TAKE OUR CUES FROM NATURE MORE OFTEN THAN WE DO FROM CULTURAL STANDARDS AND EXPECTATIONS, WE MIGHT FIND OUT THAT THERE IS MORE RIGHT WITH US THAN WRONG WITH US. FROM HERE WE CAN DISCOVER THAT HEALTH AND WELLBEING ARE ALREADY WITHIN US AND IT IS OUR INTERNAL INTELLIGENCE WHICH IS INTIMATELY CONNECTED TO THE RHYTHMS OF NATURE THAT PROMOTE OUR WELLNESS.



Heidi McGill is a registered doctor of naturopathic medicine. She has owned and operated Healing Foundations since November 2006. She has helped dozens of families discover their best balance for overall wellness in body and mind, using the principles and practices of

naturopathic medicine. Dr. Heidi regularly appears as “Guelph’s Naturopathic Expert” on Inside Guelph, a local Roger’s T.V. program. She also writes articles on topics that matter to you. Dr. Heidi is focused on educating you about how your body functions in combination with the natural and cultural environment. She is genuinely passionate about guiding you towards optimal health, vitality and more joy in your life.

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