

Top tips

for staying positive in the winter

My name is Deborah Winks and I am a Health and Social Care Lecturer and former Family Support and Parenting Manager for Flying Start, Wrexham. I've always found the winter months hard to adjust to. For me, like many people, the lack of daylight is something that I find difficult. Driving to and from work in the dark, or working at home alone, and more recently having to spend weekends at home without the immediate support of family, can take a real toll on mental health and wellbeing.

I am actively taking positive steps to commit to looking after my own wellbeing this winter and I hope these tips will empower and encourage you to do the same.

1. Get as much natural light as possible

Natural light is so important for regulating sleep, increasing mood and helping with productivity. If it is raining, splash in the puddles; if it is snowing have a snowball fight. You will feel so much better for it and so will the children. There is nothing better than coming home to a warm house after a nice winter walk.

2. Focus on what you can do rather than what you can't

This has been a big learning curve for me. I no longer see winter as something negative that I need to ride through. Focusing on all of the positive things about winter and making a list of the things that I can do has really helped.

3. Make sure you are prepared

To take control of the situation and make the best of it. So that I am prepared and can see the positive side of winter, I've bought myself and my son wellies, a warm waterproof coat and some warm fluffy socks. We will go out and have some long rainy walks. We can get muddy and wet but we will be warm and able to appreciate the change in the weather. Being prepared will take the stress away so that you don't have to search all over the house for what you need. I have made a winter box where all of the winter-wear lives, so that it is to hand when I need it.

4. Embrace the change in season

Invest in some fairy lights, cosy blankets and winter candles.

Make the most of winter and see it as a time to spend more time at home.

5. Plan

Planning is key. It keeps you going and gives you something to look forward to. Some fun ideas could be;

- A film night on a Friday with a picnic tea on a blanket on the floor.
- A family games night - you could even do this over zoom with some family and friends.
- Think about some indoor projects that you would like to plan.

6. Take control and embrace positivity

Actively recognise that winter can be hard and take control of this. Commit to taking positive steps to look after your wellbeing. I have bought a set of positivity cards and have these by the kettle. Each morning I choose a new one and read it whilst waiting for the kettle to boil. This reminds me to stay in control and this small new habit will hopefully lead on to something bigger.

7. Enjoy bedtime with your child/ren

Every evening at bed time, myself and my son tell each other about our 'lovely days' and we do the 'best' and 'worst' of the day. This is something I really look forward to and I know that hearing my son's 'best' supports my positivity.

8. Think of activities that you can do inside

- Keep old magazines and catalogues, so the children can cut and stick
- Make rice crispy cakes
- Go on an indoor treasure hunt - my son loves this
- Read a story
- Make a den
- Play a game or do a jigsaw
- Do a mini work-out together



9. Look after yourself

I recognise that I need to practice self-care more often. Someone once told me that doing so isn't selfish. In fact it makes you a better parent as you are less stressed and more able to deal with life events if you feel nurtured. Read a book, have a soak in the bath, or a catch up with friends with a nice coffee. It doesn't have to be anything big but committing to looking after yourself will instantly make you feel more positive and important.

10. Don't suffer in silence

Life can be a challenge at any time but for many, winter is even harder than usual. I am proud to say that I have a fantastic network of friends that I know I can pick up the phone and talk to if I feel alone or sad. I know that talking and admitting that you are finding things hard, may not be easy to do but I do know that it will be worth it.

Parenting is one of the hardest jobs in the world and doesn't come with instructions. It is ok to feel overwhelmed and worried but it isn't ok to feel alone. Ask for help if you need it. I am not embarrassed to say that I do ask for help and feel stronger because of it. All of the things that you are worrying about will be familiar to so many people, so let's create a community of people who reach out and support each other.

**And remember that you are
doing the best that you can.**

