Combat Depression by Embracing These Spring Activities

by ERIC PATTERSON

Embracing Springtime and Making Changes

Have you noticed the sunlight later in the day? Have you seen the buds returning to the tree branches? Have you smelled the flowers that are beginning to blossom? All of these signs point to one conclusion: spring is here.

Spring is not just about the end of winter. Spring is about new opportunity. Spring is a new chance to modify what you did not like about fall and winter.

In the colder months, the odds are stacked against you with Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). The lack of light impacts your circadian rhythms, your serotonin and your melatonin levels. These three have a bearing on your mood, sleep and energy levels.

To compound the issues, problems arise in the winter due to dangerous transportation conditions, less opportunity for physical activity and fewer prospects for socialization since people tend to stay inside where they are safe and warm.

Now the snow has melted and new flurries no longer fall. It is a time to reverse the negative momentum and make life whatever you want it to be. Gone are the excuses of the winter. In spring, you have the power to change.

There is one hurdle to jump over, though. Your depression continues to stand between you and where you want to go. Your depression zaps your energy and takes your motivation.

Worse than that, it makes you believe that whatever you try will be a sure failure. Depression negatively influences your self-esteem making your think your abilities are incapable of making change.

Spring is still your best bet, because many people with depression have a seasonal component to it. This means that symptoms flare in the winter and alleviate partially in the spring and summer. The conditions might not be optimal, but they might be as good as they are going to get. The rest is up to you.

Get Outside

One of greatest strategies for improving your depression in the spring is to get outside. Seeing the world transform as it changes from grey to green provides a hugely positive psychological benefit. If spring can make the entire world find new energy and life, surely it can do the same for you, no matter your level of depression.

Getting outside is step one. The next aspect to consider is what you are going to do now that you are in the fresh air. Depression has a way of reducing your creativity and imagination making it harder to find your own solutions. Do you want to make this spring the time to change your life? Here's how.

Next page: finding appreciation.

Find Appreciation

Gaining appreciation for the majesty of nature is a wonderful way to combat depression. Depression tells you that the world is a terrible place full of ugliness. During the winter months, this lie becomes easier to believe because there is less proof to the contrary.

In spring, you have all the proof you need to confirm your notion that depression is wrong. Spend time sitting on a chair, bench or blanket outside to absorb the wonder of nature. Inspect the big picture as well as the tiniest details.

Pay attention to everything from the blades of grass growing and turning greener to the clear, blue sky. Close your eyes to let the sunshine warm your skin. At the same time, listen to the sounds and smell the scents around you – make your appreciation a multisensory experience.

Write down your thoughts and elements of the outdoors that you appreciate. These writings can become a springtime gratitude journal in which you document the positive outdoor changes associated with spring.

Some say that connecting to nature is a spiritual experience. It can make you feel connected to the earth around you. A sense of belonging always lowers depression.

Walk to Explore

Now that you have been able to enjoy the world around your home, go for a walk to see what else the world has to offer.

Depending on your location and physical health, stick to the sidewalks or take an expedition deep into the woods. Go with the intention of finding as many beautiful elements as you can.

Be mindful during your walk by thinking about what you see, hear, smell and touch rather than the problems that depression tries to put in your mind.

As an added bonus, this walk will help reduce depression by flooding your brain with wanted chemicals triggered by exercise. To improve the experience, walk with a quick pace and walk often. Both will heighten the exercise experience and walking often will allow you to track the slow and steady changes to the world around you. This serves as a reminder that it takes time for leaves to grow just as it takes time to change depression. The best successes in life do not happen overnight.

Garden

Gardening puts you in the position of being an active participant in nature rather than being a passive observer. Remember, no one is expecting you to plant an acre of corn or soybeans, but consider planting some flowers inside or outside.

If space is an issue, simple planter boxes filled with soil make a fantastic option. If space is not an issue, plant a variety of items including flowers, vegetables and even fruits.

Planting a berry plant, like strawberries, is an excellent way to appreciate nature and then eat the fruits of your labor, literally.

Gardening yields a sense of power and control over your surroundings that is very valuable during periods of depression. It is a way to focus your energies outwardly rather than constantly thinking about the unchangeable aspects of yourself.

This break will allow you to refocus on yourself with renewed energy and a fresh perspective at a later time.

Next page: home improvements and picnics.

Home Improvements

Similarly, spring is a wonderful time to make some longer-lasting improvements in the form of sprucing up your house. Choose projects that are appropriate for the space and budget you have.

Sure, it would be nice if you could build a new house or completely redo your landscaping, but a number of factors make this impractical. Focus on the small changes that lead to big results.

Paint your front door a vibrant color that will boost your mood each time you walk through. Plant some evergreen shrubs to give you color throughout the year. Clean off and repaint your outdoor furniture that has grown dingy and faded over the years.

Renewing and revitalizing the things around you has the ability to do the same for the world inside you.

Plan a Picnic

Exploring and enjoying the world can be, but does not have to be, a solitary endeavor. If you have been successful completing the items above, celebrate by inviting friends, family and neighbors over for a picnic.

Don’t have the space? Plan to meet at the park or a grassy patch down the street. Share your newfound love of spring with the people in your life. This will add a social component that is needed following the isolation common in winter.

You may find that your loved ones are struggling with their own feelings of depression. If this is the case, invite them to share in your future spring experiences. Helping others is another way to fight back against depression.

Avoid the expense and planning of a large event by having simple foods and drinks to share while socializing on blankets. You could forgo food altogether by organizing a walking tour of your neighborhood. You can discuss the new perspectives discovered through your spring project.

Conclusion

Use the change in weather as an opportunity to mark a change in your life. By acknowledging the impact of a long winter, you begin to looking forward to solutions.

Getting out in the natural beauty of the outdoors while exercising, nurturing life, improving your home and reconnecting with friends will do much to curtail the progress of depression.

With hard work and persistence, a happier you will burst forth like a tulip breaking ground.