

The editors on... MANAGING THE WINTER BLUES

Just because it's miserable outside doesn't mean your mood has to match. Lift your spirits with these clever tools and tricks

PHOTOGRAPH BY MAYA SKELTON



Medina Azaldin UPLIFTING WORKOUTS

I HAVE NEVER BEEN ATHLETIC. IN SCHOOL, MY CHOSEN SPORT was 'chess club' (code for spending the afternoon gossiping with a friend). As an adult, I've never been more grateful for a trend than the 'bed rot' phenomenon, where hunkering down under blankets counts as a full day's work. I adore doing nothing. How then, did I find myself as a competitive cheerleader and adding regular barre classes to my schedule? Well, the former was driven by sheer loneliness. As for the latter, they're the one thing that I'll consider doing for my own longevity and wellbeing, as you won't find me giving up sugar or sitting in a cryochamber any time soon.

While it is difficult to get motivated in the colder, darker months, I've found doing a workout that you genuinely enjoy is the most important thing to look for. I enjoy performing (hence, the cheerleading) and aesthetically pleasing activities, so barre and Pilates feel less like a chore than doing a HIIT session or going to the gym.

If you get the winter blues, then movement – no matter what that looks like to you – can do wonders. 'Research has shown that [doing] low-intensity aerobic exercises, such as Pilates or a brisk walk, for around 30 minutes at least three times a week will have a positive effect on mood,' says Claire Mills, a physiotherapist and the founder of Core LDN. 'Any exercise that makes you focus on your breath is great for your spirits, [as it] activates your parasympathetic nervous system, which helps promote calmness and relaxation.'

It could be a virtual workout that you do at home (I like Fit By Mik and Fluidform Pilates on YouTube), a lunchtime walk with a colleague or trying a fun new class. It's impossible not to feel revived after a session of dance cardio at London's Frame studios, and Better Health offer inclusive activities for people with disabilities across the UK. Try incorporating some weight training into your routine to help with bone health and muscle strength, too.

'Exercise releases "feel-good" chemicals, such as serotonin and endorphins, which can help decrease stress and anxiety and encourage better moods,' Mills says. See you at the barre. >



1 Warm-Up Massage Balm, £44, ELEMIS 2 Sports bra, £65, VUORI 3 Magnesium Ease Body Spray, £20, THE NUE CO. 4 Leggings, £40, ADANOLA

1 Wellbeing Pod Luxe, £135, NEOM 2 Otto Super Candle, £160, MALIN+GOETZ 3 Coco Mademoiselle EDP, £75 for 30ml, CHANEL 4 Water Meadow Breathing Balm, £22, BERTIOLI



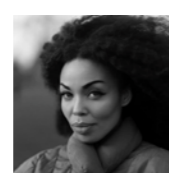
Katie Withington
COMFORTING SCENTS

FROM RECOGNISING YOUR MUM'S PERFUME ON A STRANGER to being hit by a whiff of fresh pastries en route to the office, our sense of smell has a huge influence on the way we experience the world. Scents have a direct pathway to the brain's limbic system, including the amygdala and hippocampus, the areas connected to emotion and memory. So it's no surprise that they can reconnect us with the past and loved ones far away, create a feeling of comfort in a place and leave a lasting impression on the people around us.

As someone who is particularly prone to winter blues, I've learned to use this tool tactically. Owning a signature perfume is an age-old concept and, as an instant joy booster, it's one that I've extended to my home, too. Malin+Goetz's Otto Candle is my uplifting composition of choice when it comes to scent-scaping, and I'll keep its aroma burning constantly in my living-room throughout the chilly winter months. It's bright and earthy but has a romantic touch, thanks to rose and geranium, which is feminine and effortlessly cool all at once. I carry a similarly cossetting bouquet, Chanel Coco Mademoiselle, in my handbag and spritz it on my scarf before tramping through puddles on a damp morning commute and leaving the office under cold and cloudy skies. It's a comforting reminder of the homely space that awaits.

If I'm feeling extra frazzled throughout the day, then I turn to Bertoli's Breathing Balm as a sure-fire way to ground myself again. A blend of water mint, eucalyptus and rosemary, this sharp herbal remedy effortlessly cuts through my foggiest moments. It's the perfect companion when you need to take a few extra deep breaths.

Sleeping well has always been a tall order for me, too, and I find that my evening wind-down benefits from some fragrant enrichment. As well as supplements and specialist lights, I use aromatherapy to set the scene. Neom's Wellbeing Pod is one of the most efficient ways to break up the day via scent, particularly if you WFB (work from bed) throughout the week. Switching between better sleep and stress relief, I'll dilute one of the brand's signature mood-boosting essential oils for an hour before getting cosy; it has a similar effect to using a pillow mist, but the aroma lasts so much longer.



Emma Dabiri
FAUX
SUNSHINE

MONTHS ON END UNDER A GUN-METAL-GREY SKY CAN TAKE its toll. While I have heard about SAD lamps or light therapy many times over the years, I'd never seriously thought about their effectiveness. How could a mere lamp counteract the power of the entire sky or the oppressiveness of the season? As someone who is extremely sensitive to artificial, bright lighting – it hurts my eyes and can make me feel dysregulated – I hadn't considered how the right type of light might have entirely the opposite effect, or just how powerful it might be as a tool to enhance my mood and improve my wellbeing.

Having spent a few days with my bedroom and office illuminated by two different lamps from the Lumie collection, the Task and the Dash, I am an immediate convert. Within just a couple minutes of switching out my old lamps for these new ones, I felt my mood notably improve. Within 30 minutes or so, my eldest son commented on it: 'Mum, you seem so much happier than you did earlier.' Pretty miraculous results.

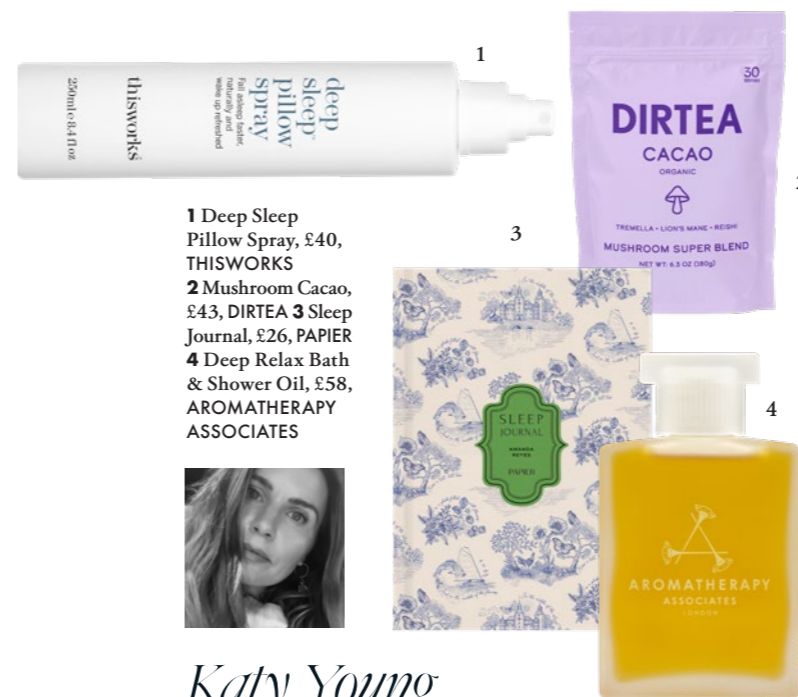
This morning, I had to get up at 5am to catch a flight, but, honestly, even that brutally early wake-up call had the edge taken off it by the warm, bright glow that flooded my room. The design is super pleasing, too – it's sleek in appearance and to the touch. And with the Task (I have that in my bedroom), the brightness of the light is controlled by sliding your finger softly along the Lumie script across the base.

I'm now off to work out which models I need to get for my living-room and dining-room. Right now, I have my eye on the Brazil and the Halo. Let there be light!

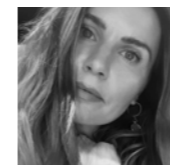
Light can be a powerful tool to improve your wellbeing



1 Task, £249, LUMIE
2 Dash, £179, LUMIE



1 Deep Sleep Pillow Spray, £40, THISWORKS
2 Mushroom Cacao, £43, DIRTEA 3 Sleep Journal, £26, PAPIER
4 Deep Relax Bath & Shower Oil, £58, AROMATHERAPY ASSOCIATES



Katy Young
INNER PEACE

IT'S FAIR TO SAY THAT I HAVE NEVER BEEN VERY GOOD AT routine, always finding it a challenge to strike any kind of healthy balance. My wellbeing pendulum swings pretty aggressively from, say, the more virtuous practice of bed-by-8pm-with-a-cup-of-organic-cacao to a slow, remorseful peeling of limbs and eyes from the sofa and TikTok feed at 2am. Balance is more of an extreme sport in my house.

But time has taught me that when things start to feel off-kilter, there are some lovely fail-safe practices that I can, and must, rely on to restore harmony – without so much as a whiff of meditation for the busy-minded among us.

I actually love winter for the way it slows things down and encourages some nesting and nuzzling into your own space. But there's no doubt it can bring along the familiar seasonal blues. 'Winter means we spend more time inside and can become isolated from other people, which leads to overthinking, catastrophising and obsessing about things you cannot change,' warns Dr Anna Persaud, CEO of ThisWorks.

Having something of a treadmill mind, I know all about such fallout. That's why I keep a pen and paper close at hand on those bleak midwinter nights, to note down and recognise any unhelpful thinking. 'Journaling can create a sense of distance from our thoughts and, in so doing, we can pause the negative ideas and mentally "step back" or let go, weakening their hold and providing us with the opportunity to change what we focus our mind upon,' Persaud tells me.

An open mind has also led me to breathwork – and, let's face it, possibly a step closer to meditation. Box breathing is a small but mighty ritual that I practise as soon as my head hits the pillow. The simple method – inhaling through your nose for four counts, holding your breath for four, exhaling for four and holding for another four – moves us out of the fight-or-flight state by activating the parasympathetic nervous system, which calms your mind and reduces stress. For me, it creates stillness or, as Oprah Winfrey so brilliantly describes, the practice of 'mindlessness'.



Urmi Pandit
JOYFUL COLOUR

BEING DEFICIENT IN VITAMIN D AT THE BEST OF TIMES, I RARELY welcome winter weather with open arms. And when my mood starts to reflect the gloom and grey outside, I find myself missing summer more than ever. Alas, hopping on a flight somewhere far, far away isn't an option, so I have to bank on something cheaper and quicker: make-up. 'Look good, feel good', right?

Come winter, I embrace a much more exuberant colour palette, ditching my usual warm-toned hues and seeking joy in brighter shades, with colourful updates for the eyes, lips and cheeks. A hint of highlighting can work wonders. For instance, a pop of glitter placed in the inner corners of the eyes creates an awakened, revived and refreshed look with minimal effort; I like to layer the silvery Platinum and pearly-white Iced Out shades from Huda Beauty's Icy Nude Eyeshadow Palette. For a frosty-evening vibe, a swipe of metallic blue is perfect (especially for brown eyes like mine), whether drawn into a bold wing or smudged out under the waterline. I use Zoeva's highly pigmented eye pencil for a pretty, light-catching shimmer.

As for the cheeks, a deep berry not only complements the blue perfectly, but also emulates the rosy, fresh-faced glow that's harder to come by during these months. Try a blush stick (I love 19/99's) for no-hassle blending, bringing life and colour back into the face; apply it just above your cheekbones for gentle sculpting. Victoria Beckham's Posh Lipstick in Jump – a vibrant but natural mauve – is a polished way to tie the whole look together when paired with a dark-brown lip liner. That's what works for me. But whatever shades you choose to try, there's something to be said for the act of putting on your make-up, in and of itself, and feeling ready to face the world. □

A pop of glitter refreshes your look with minimal effort



1 Icy Nude Eyeshadow Palette, £62, HUDA BEAUTY 2 Posh Lipstick in Jump, £37, VICTORIA BECKHAM BEAUTY 3 Velvet Love Eyeliner Pencil in Metallic Marine Blue, £16, ZOEVA 4 Cream Blush Stick in Szolo, £28, 19/99