

# What To Do When Feeling Blue

Deepest winter is often the most difficult for many emotionally. Reframing your emotions at this time of the year will help you better understand negative thought patterns and get through the next few weeks emotionally stronger. VAST PR's Kate Ashley-Norman tackles an often thorny topic.

**Curiosity is your strongest weapon in the fight against the winter blues, writes Kate Ashley-Norman.**

Life is full of conflicts. The Middle East, Ukraine, the UK parliament, inside our own heads...

Discourse and debates can either resolve or enflame depending on an individual's ability to listen to both sides with an open mind. Unfortunately, the current prevalence around disinformation and misinformation weaves doubt and fear that can affect everyday life.

## Farting cows

Are farting cows really destroying a world in which cows have farted for millennia? Can a man really become 100% a woman based on feelings and emotions, yet remain fully intact?

Is the strength of conviction for so many of these debates based on facts or on an overwhelming need to cling to a belief, as the alternative (admitting you're

wrong) could be too costly?

One of the key reasons why I removed myself from the world of psychotherapy was because of how debunked narratives that were built around our emotional wellbeing, were still entrenched so deeply into the system.

The biggest of these is that depression is the result of a chemical imbalance in the brain which can be treated by taking antidepressants – pills that are proven to have myriad side effects and have a strong addictive element to them.

The chemical imbalance myth has been debunked many times over. Yet it is still trumpeted as an explanation for depression, giving big pharma the perfect opportunity to create long-term, often life-long customers.

## Now the drugs don't work

There is a certain devolution of self agency in the chemical imbalance myth. It means that the depression is happening 'to' someone, so they have little or no control over overcoming it themselves, creating a need and reliance on pharmaceutical relief. However, the more relatable causes of depression – challenging circumstances, stress and overwhelm, loss and grief, rumination, poverty, helplessness, despair, anxiety – cannot be cured with a pill.

The purpose of this article is not to pill shame anyone – there are after all 86 million and growing, prescriptions issued for them

every year in the UK – but to highlight the fact that depression, as a state, is actually a perfectly normal, human response to life that every single person goes through at some stage in their life. Often its prolongation is because we don't give it the time and space it needs to work through because it is so painful. Or because everyday demands don't allow us to.

Dare I say it, even talking therapies can lead to an excessive rumination and continuation of negative emotions.

## Blue Monday

The third Monday in January is often regarded as Blue Monday. Not only have you been back at work after two weeks of festivities in which conflicts and cracks in family relationships are often exposed, you are waiting for payday and it feels like there is nothing to look forward to. Even those who are mentally strong need to dig that much deeper when days are short and the sun has gone into hiding.

Reframing those negative emotions with curiosity can give you the time and space to better understand your feelings within the context of your life as a whole. Curiosity is a progressive emotion – it gives you the chance to explore alternatives. It may not give you any immediate answers, however, it will open your mind and help you navigate your way into those more optimistic early days of spring. **f**

