

Why do we feel so 'blah' after Christmas?

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The holiday season is usually a joyous occasion, but many people feel "blah" soon after the celebrations. What is it about Christmas that makes people feel this way?

Psychologists describe the blah feeling as "low [mood](#)" or "languishing". Low mood is often temporary and [can't be attributed](#) to any specific cause. [Languishing is](#) a longer-lasting state of low mood, emptiness and aimlessness that can stay with people for weeks or months. If not addressed, it can lead to depression.

One reason people feel this way relates to goals. Setting goals and striving towards them is a basic human need. Aiming to reach a goal keeps people [motivated, excited and happy](#). More importantly, [having goals](#) and seeing progress towards them can enhance [positive emotions](#), such as excitement, enthusiasm or pride, which is why preparing for Christmas can be so exhilarating.

Organising gatherings, decorating your home, planning dinner—all these activities aim towards fulfilling the goal of having a good Christmas. The problem with goals is that when they are achieved, they leave people [feeling flat](#).

The best way to fix this is by creating another goal. Coming up with an exciting [goal](#) for January or the new year may become a motivating force to boost your wellbeing. But setting goals is not enough to shake off the negative feeling. You need to look after your body too.

A healthy body ...

The effect the body has on the mind can also leave you feeling blah after Christmas. On average, people gain [one pound \(0.45kg\)](#) of weight over the festive season. Unfortunately, it can be [difficult to lose](#) this newly gained weight.

At the same time, overeating is associated with a lower mood. To help you take control of your weight and prevent unnecessary pounds piling on, research shows that [weighing yourself regularly](#) or [fasting intermittently](#) can help you eat less and maintain your weight over the festive period.

Weight gain is not the only issue people experience after Christmas. People change their routines significantly: they eat more, [drink more](#) and [sleep more](#). They drink on average double the [amount of alcohol](#) they

usually drink. Also, sleeping patterns tend to change, with people sleeping on average [5% longer than usual](#). All of these changes can affect your mood.

To feel less blah after Christmas, it is essential to establish a new, healthier routine. For example, switching to a plant-based diet has been shown to improve [energy levels](#) and the ability to think and reason (cognitive function). It also reduces inflammation and the effect is more prominent and lasting than going on a [conventional diet](#), such as a low-calorie or smaller-portion diet. It can also [improve mood](#), which will banish the blah feeling.

Weekend effect

Feeling down can also be [related to](#) the "[weekend effect](#)" and the "blue Monday phenomenon". People's mood increases during the weekend due to greater autonomy (controlling one's activities) and connecting with others. But mood significantly worsens as soon as the weekend is over. A similar effect occurs for some at the end of Christmas, especially those who need to be back at work shortly after. The thoughts of Christmas being over and getting back to the old routine may instigate the feeling of blah.

Many activities can help you think about the future with more optimism and hopefulness, instead of dread or worry. One such activity is the "[best possible self](#)" exercise, where you imagine yourself in a future in which everything has turned out as you wanted it. This results in an immediate increase of [positive emotions](#). Studies have shown that [people](#) who do this have [less-frequent visits](#) to their doctor five months later.

Here is an adapted "[best possible self](#)" exercise you can try after Christmas. Take a piece of paper and for ten minutes write down everything about your best possible self. Imagine that you are in

excellent health. You have been taking excellent care of your body and mind. You have worked hard to accomplish all your health-related goals. Now write what you have done, what obstacles you have overcome, how you did it, and your result.

Regardless of the reasons for feeling blah, what matters is you acknowledge the feeling of aimlessness and low mood. Only then can you choose to do something about it. This may include increasing physical activity, exercising, eating [nutritious food](#), planning, or simply sitting with it, fully aware that it is what you feel, and it is OK to feel this way—[many others](#) feel the same way. After all, wellbeing is a journey, not a destination. Tomorrow is another day.

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