

WARM UP YOUR MINDSET

Keep motivated throughout the cooler months with these smart strategies that will bust even your best excuses

Fact: winter is cold. But depressing, dreary and an excuse to hibernate? Total myth. If your list of reasons to do zilch when the cold comes is as long as your Netflix recently watched list (read: very), it's time to step up your motivation game and makeover your mindset. We hit up the experts to let us in on some of winter's biggest cold, hard untruths.

'BUT COLD WEATHER IS SO DEPRESSING!'

You're not alone if you've used every excuse under the 5pm-setting sun to sit around on a cold winter's day. "With winter there are often seasonal changes to mood," explains counsellor and life coach Linda Magson, who specialises in goal-setting and breaking unhealthy routines. "Most people already have a mindset about it. They feel stuck," she adds. Which is why getting outdoors – even if it's just between cups of tea – is even *more* important. Yes, a lack of light can increase fatigue and

a strong desire to stay the heck in bed. But only if you let it.

If you're feeling like all-I-can-do-is-eat-chocolate-and-hide-under-a-blanket-all-weekend, Magson recommends taking a mindful approach to your rut. "Sit with any negative thoughts rather than trying to resist them," she urges. "Struggle often gives negativity fuel, whereas just *being* can bring on a shift." In other words, acknowledge that you're feeling lazy, allow a little 'do nothing time' and the motivation to plan your next non-couch-related move should follow.

But having the get-up-and-go to literally get-up-and-go anywhere minus your Ugg boots is easier said than done. "Try and see the opportunity in the situation," says Magson. "Ask yourself, 'What is this weather a great opportunity for?'" If outside is looking a little more *Game of Thrones* season seven than one, take the opportunity to meal prep for the week or do a 10-minute at-home movement session. >



MINDSET HACKS

“When you’re feeling positive, draft a small goal and strive for alternate behaviour – even if it’s just a tweak a week.”

‘BUT GETTING OFF THE COUCH IS SUCH A MISSION!’

Find yourself in a ‘pyjamas, couch, eat, repeat’ situation come colder days? Break your old habit loop and create a new one. In his book *The Power of Habit*, Charles Duhigg suggests that the most effective way to bust out of this cycle is to create something fresh. And it’s as easy as recognising cues, behaviours and rewards.

According to Duhigg, the key to kicking an addictive pattern is making a conscious decision that every time a certain cue or trigger happens, you’ll introduce a new healthy behaviour instead.

Basically, a blah weather forecast (cue), that leads to staying in all week (behaviour) just to stay warm (reward)

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is a cycle that can leave you feeling sluggish and far from your wellness goals. However by making a continuous conscious effort to break the loop every time the trigger occurs, that same gloomy forecast (cue) could equal a gentle at-home workout (behaviour) to keep you moving and feeling motivated (reward).

And if you need another excuse to kick the couch-all-day thing? Exercise is the key to starting good habits, even in other parts of your life.

“Exercise is a keystone habit that triggers widespread change,” says Duhigg.

“Typically, people who are active start eating better and become more productive at work. They smoke less and show more patience with colleagues and family. They use their credit cards less frequently and say they feel less stressed.”

Right, 10 sit-ups it is.

‘BUT EATING HEALTHY MID-YEAR IS SO MUCH HARDER!’

Getting up early to prep your lunch on the best of days can be a struggle, but throw darkness, the cold and it-just-being-winter into the mix and, man, the tupperware

battle is real. But keeping focused on your ultimate goal – health and wellness – is just as important when you can’t be bothered.

“Try and avoid emotional reasoning when making decisions,” urges Linda. “Rather than deciding not to do something purely because you don’t *feel* like it, break the logic down.”

If, for instance, it’s been challenging getting up early for work to make a packed lunch, change the way you frame the choice. Take “not feeling it” out of the equation, and instead ask yourself, “If not now, *when* will I do this?” The choice then becomes between times of day – “Shall I just start doing this the night before, or do a huge

cook-up Sunday?” – rather than whether it’s happening or not. That way, you’re less likely to ditch your could-have-been home-cooked lunch for unhealthy cafe food.

‘OH YEAH, BUT...’

Before you sell your couch and donate your entire track-pants collection to an op-shop far, far away, it’s important to keep in mind that balance is still key when it comes to health and wellbeing. So, for example, ditching your daily walk as a once- or twice-off because it’s too cold is normal and healthy. Just don’t put your entire list of long-term goals on hold for three months. ■

5 TIPS TO MAKE HIBERNATING PRODUCTIVE

- 1 Take the time to get your mind and motivation around your goals ahead.
- 2 Spend 10 minutes stretching while watching TV.
- 3 Get an early night – a study has found that a good night’s sleep aids weight loss.
- 4 Do a big, healthy cook-up and meal prep for the week.
- 5 Chill before refuelling for a week of goal-kicking.

HOW TO CHANGE A HABIT

Training your brain to react differently to certain triggers isn’t an impossible goal. Think about specific situations that might spark a negative reaction and brainstorm some healthier, more positive alternatives to replace that behaviour. You can consciously develop healthy habits if you put your mind to it, so look at the cycles that could happen in your day and think about a plan B of how to deal with them. You’ll feel rewarded by tackling any motivational problems with a different, healthier approach.



Words Cassie Steel