

Battling the post-Christmas blues

*Charles & Charlene Van den Akker
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Manitoba winters are long, and February can be a particularly tough month for many. Christmas is over, holiday bills are due, and many of us feel like hibernating. Here are some tips for fending off the “winter blues.”

Spend smartly: If you've found yourself in debt from overspending during the holidays (again!), make a plan to pay that off quickly. More importantly, live a new mantra: “Give 10%, save 10%, and spend the rest with joy and thanksgiving.” If you think you can't do it, find a Christian life coach or financial planner who can help you reorganize.

Eat wisely: Limit mood-altering foods and drinks containing caffeine, sugar, or alcohol. They create artificial “highs” that are always followed by unpleasant “lows!”

Love consistently: Around Christmas-time, you'll see friends and family that you don't see most of the year. Rather than saying “See you next year!” keep in touch; nurture relationships by regular visiting year-round. Over long distances this may be difficult, yet most of us have not only a phone, but also email, texting, Facebook, and live video chat. What stops you from being in touch year-round?

Improve your “self”: Find an interesting class or workshop that will help you become the person that you (and God) want you to be....

...to give selflessly: Use your God-given talents for others. Volunteer at a nursing home, cook a meal for a family in need, babysit for a couple who need a date night. Possibilities are endless!

Finish completely: Unfinished business is a weight that drags you down. Pick one thing you can do – start to finish – and (like the Nike slogan) *just do it*. Paint the bedroom, sort the photos into albums, fix the plumbing, write the letter. You'll feel better when it's done!

Dwell joyfully: Make your home into a fun home instead of a show-home. Winter is a great time to embrace colour and light, rearrange or change around rooms, add living things (plants, animals?), inject humour (plaques, wall hangings, books), and play music at an ambient volume. Leave music playing when you're away so that you always come home to a joyful sound!

Relax regularly: Give yourself at least an hour each day to do some things just because you want to, not because you have to. Take a hot bath, read a good book, go for a walk (with a friend is best). Couples – don't forget your date nights!

Worship thankfully the God who made you, and made this season for you!

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