Getting Through the Dark Months
Week 3: Combat SAD with Diet and Exercise

Minimize Carbohydrate-Rich Food

We tend to crave carbohydrate-rich food in the winter, but it might be a wise idea to **minimize carbs** in your diet. Our bodies like the feeling of high sugar and high carb food because they **boost serotonin levels** in the brain. Unfortunately, this can result in a crash later on after the spike in your blood glucose levels have dropped (Armstrong, 2007).

What Should I Eat?

Keep your blood glucose levels stable by eating meals at regular times with snacks in between. Choose complex carbohydrates (e.g., whole grain pasta, rice, bread) and fruits and vegetables. Try incorporating omega-3 rich proteins, like salmon as well! (Armstrong, 2007).

Staying Active during the Winter Months

As the days become shorter, it is very difficult to stick to our routines and exercise. Although it is no surprise that staying active is important during the cold winter months, but how do we do that?! (Armstrong, 2007).

1. Go for walks during *lunch* or before work while there is still light.
2. Go straight from work to the gym.
3. Start a winter sport like cross-country skiing, snowboarding, or skating. Even join a walking or running group.
4. Have an at-home activity, such as a workout DVD when the weather isn't great.
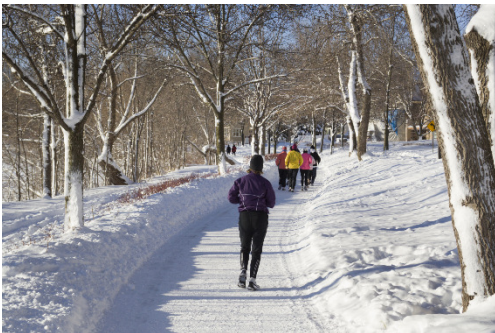
Exercise Boosts Endorphins

Endorphins are those "feel good" chemicals that the body produces naturally, like serotonin. Since your body is already craving this chemical through sugar, you can give your body what it wants through exercise (Armstrong, 2007)! Regular exercise is known to have significant benefits for people with mental health concerns such as depression. In fact, it can help you recover from depression *and* prevent it from occurring in the first place (National Health Services Choices, 2013).

Armstrong, R. (2007). How to beat the winter blues. *The Independent*.

National Health Service Choices. 2013. Seasonal affective disorder – treatment. Retrieved from www.nhs.uk