How to cope with winter blues and homesickness

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Moving to a different country with a new language and culture causes a lot of stress and anxiety. Adapting takes time, and you are destined to feel homesick or to experience winter blues at some point, especially if your original country doesn't have long winters with snow.

It takes time to get to know the country, the people, and their lifestyle. And if you don't have enough information about all you can do to protect yourself from the cold or how you can enjoy winter, going through the Canadian winter can become challenging.

Searching for information is your first task; do web searches, talk to people who have more experience, and look for support in your community; some places offer workshops for new immigrants. Secondly, know that it's natural to every human being to go through winter blues or to feel homesick.

Winter blues are basically our body trying to prepare ourselves for a change of season. But if you don't do anything to help yourself through this change, it can become worse and develop into Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).

The disorder (SAD) is a serious form of depression; people who suffer from depression are also more prone to develop this condition. If you notice these symptoms you should look for mental health professional help.

- Decreased interest in social or work activities
- Feelings of sadness or despair
- Lack of motivation
- Sleeping too much
- Overeating
- Feeling hopeless about the future
- Inability to concentrate

Winter blues symptoms are fewer and include: Change in appetite, sluggishness, and Less energy.

To alleviate these symptoms, you can try to:

- Increase your sun exposure
- Ask your family doctor about taking Vitamin D supplements
- Exercise: find winter activities to do.
- Eat well
- Treat yourself with music you love, hang pictures that make you feel good, or buy flowers or plants to make your house a comforting place.
- Use essential oils
- Start a gratitude journal, for example: write 3 positive things every day.
- Set projects to be completed

- Use SAD lamps or do light therapy

Now, talking about homesickness: it's distress caused by being separated from home. It may look different for a lot of people. Some of the most common symptoms are:

- Feeling sad or down
- Grief over the loss of familiar surroundings
- Anxiety about the new
- Withdrawing from or avoiding people
- Wanting to stay in your room or being afraid to leave your room
- Feeling nostalgic about things that remind you of home
- Being easily irritated by new things, or things that are done differently than how you're used to.

Feeling Homesick is a natural part of the process of adapting; we all feel uncomfortable with new surroundings and wish to be back with familiar people and places, but this will fade once you get comfortable with your new environment.

To ensure your adaptation, you can try to:

1. Bring some comforts of home to your new place. It can be pictures, decorations, or a favorite blanket or pillow. The more familiar your surroundings are, the more comfortable you'll feel.
2. Make yourself active, go out, explore, get to know people and places, and avoid staying home all the time.
3. Keep in touch with friends and family from your original country.
4. Talk with people about the similarities and differences between each place and culture. Talk about your feelings and what you miss.

And any time you notice your symptoms are too strong and are interfering with your ability to study, work, or enjoy life, it's time to get professional help.