

Well-Being Tip

October 2025



Leaning into Winter

Winter is coming! If you find yourself resisting or even dreading the colder months, read on. This month's well-being tip focuses on how leaning into winter while taking some steps to practice self-care can promote well-being.

1. **Acceptance of winter.** First, it is important to accept that it will get colder and darker, and our bodies will respond to that. Animals slip into a slower, more restful way of being during winter months. Some hibernate, some just become less active, and some create cozy burrows to rest in until warmer temperatures return. Animals do not shame themselves for needing more rest during wintertime and neither should you! After all, humans belong to the animal kingdom and the need for more rest during the winter months is natural.
 - a. In her book, *Wintering*, Katherine May says it best,
 - i. “Plants and animals don’t fight the winter; they don’t pretend it’s not happening and attempt to carry on the same lives that they lived in the summer. They prepare. They adapt...Once we stop wishing it were summer, winter can be a glorious season in which the world takes on a sparse beauty and even the pavements sparkle. It’s a time for reflection and recuperation, for slow replenishment, for putting your house in order.”

2. **Practice hygge.** A Danish word, hygge is the practice of gathering small groups of friends or family together indoors, in a cozy, quiet setting ([Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Denmark](#)). These gatherings are informal, pleasant, and typically center around a long meal. Practicing hygge often means being intentional about creating a cozy space at home by lowering the lighting, lighting some candles, or, if possible, sitting around a fireplace. Staying socially connected during the winter months is an important way to promote well-being. What better way to lean into winter than with a few close friends?
3. **Get some natural light!** Try to spend a little time outside, especially in the morning. Sunlight encourages our bodies to produce serotonin, a neurotransmitter that is crucial for improving mood. Morning sunlight may also help to regulate your sleep schedule, which can get out of whack during the winter months due to the shorter days. If it's not too cold to do so, maybe consider walking or biking to campus in the morning so that you can get some sunlight.
4. **Try a light box.** If natural sunlight isn't enough to boost your mood and regulate sleep patterns, consider trying light therapy. Light boxes imitate outdoor light and can be helpful if used for 20-30 minutes in the morning. It is important to choose a light box that produces at least 10,000 lux of light and minimum UV light. Not ready to buy your own light box? University of Iowa students can check out light boxes free of charge. For additional information, visit [Student Wellness Light Therapy](#). Note: Individuals with bipolar disorder should consult with their doctor before using a light box.

Support Spaces

Join clinicians from the Office of Education Support and the Medical Student Counseling Center for support spaces, a support group open to all CCOM students.

- October 27 from 5:00-6:00pm in general hospital room C238
- November 5 from 12:00-1:00 pm in 2126 MERF
- November 17 from 5:00-6:00 pm in Kelch Conference Room
- December 10 from 12:00-1:00 pm in Kelch Conference Room
- December 15 from 5:00-6:00 pm in Kelch Conference Room

Connect with the MSCC

The Medical Student Counseling Center (MSCC) offers free, confidential personal counseling, disability and accessibility services, academic and career development support, and wellness consultations to MD and PA students.

Contact MSCC

Email: osac-mscc@uiowa.edu Phone: 319-335-8056

(Email should not be used to share confidential information or in the event of an emergency.)

If you are in crisis or you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide, call or text 9-8-8 or 844-461-5420.

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