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April 16, 2025

Spring Pick-Me-Ups

Along the forest hiking trail, buds are appearing on shrubs; small, bright green leaves are opening on fine branches; and the tips of evergreens are starting to show new growth.

Welcome, spring! The sight of glowing yellow daffodils or emerging cherry blossoms lifts my spirits, while the occasional, intermittent bright, warm day significantly boosts my energy and mood!

It is nature's time for renewal. In this column we explore how the changing season helps us refresh and feel renewed so that we can finish the school year strong!

What Happens to Your Body in Spring?

It is no surprise that increased sunlight and warmer temperatures often have a positive effect on our mood and energy. Personally, I feel more alive and rejuvenated after the long, grey, rainy or snowy winter months have ended.

In spring, melatonin production goes down and so may depression. Flowers bloom, the days become longer, and many people experience a psychological renewal. The fresh start that spring offers can play a significant role in our mental health.

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) and Spring Relief

For those who may suffer from SAD, spring can bring a welcome relief. SAD is characterised by depressive symptoms that can appear and escalate, often during winter when the days are short, cold, and dark. When spring brings increased sunlight, this exposure can boost serotonin levels in the brain, acting as a natural antidepressant for many and providing a tangible “lift” in mood.

The Symbolism of Renewal

We are naturally inclined to associate spring with new life or new beginnings. This connection to renewal and growth can lead to a mental shift where individuals are more inspired to set new goals, embark on fresh projects, or simply declutter their minds and surroundings.

Embracing the Health Benefits of Nature

We have explored the positive impact of nature on our mental well-being in many ReFresh articles. Numerous studies suggest that being outside in the forest or at the beach can lower cortisol levels, improve your mood, and reduce feelings of anxiety. Springtime invites us to leave our winter den and go outdoors!

Increasing our Activity

Spring’s warmer temperatures and the call from the outdoors naturally encourage us to increase our activity, which can benefit both our physical and mental health. For example exercise – which releases endorphins that act as natural painkillers and enhance our mood – is a great way to help reduce depression and anxiety. Follow that desire to go ride your bike, take evening walks, or jog on the trails to elevate your energy, build endurance, and strengthen your brain health!

Immune System Boost

An increased exposure to sunshine provides a boost to our immune system, particularly due to our increased absorption of vitamin D. In addition, being outdoors can reduce our exposure to airborne germs!

Allergies

We do want to note that not all spring-related changes are positive for everyone's health. Take my older son, for example, who from April to August has a continuous cough due to his grass allergy. The increase in pollen can lead to allergic reactions in many, prompting symptoms such as fatigue, congestion, and irritation in the eyes, nose, and throat. While springtime can be uplifting, those with allergies might have a slightly more challenging experience, and will want to be proactive in managing these symptoms.

Adjusting to Change

Depending on where you are in life, even positive change can be challenging. The shift from winter's slowness to spring's vibrancy may be overwhelming for some folks. Recognise that it is okay to transition at your own pace, and to take the time needed to adjust to the new season.

BCPVPA Staff Spring 'Pick-Me-Ups'

Positive psychology encourages us to notice and be grateful for those things that bring us joy, that bring us calm, and that make us feel good!

In that context, I asked the BCPVPA team the following question:

"How does the arrival of Spring help boost your well-being?"

Their responses certainly aligned with the research provided above!

Scott Robinson, Executive Director

"Longer days mean more time to walk along the waterfront in the evenings and enjoy the cherry blossoms in my backyard..."

Shannon Behan, President

"Spring is like nature's reset button and I'm ready; more daylight means more energy to get outside, delicious fresh local produce, and more time to connect with friends! I love running and hiking, paddleboarding or just meeting friends for coffee, and springtime affords me more time to do all of that in the beautiful outdoors!"

Carmen Eberle, Director, Member Support Services

"The longer, brighter days of spring motivate me to venture out, discover new trails, and enjoy the beauty that the changing season brings."

Sandra Murphy, Director, Communications

"The anticipation of planning and planting our garden, and knowing that – very soon – our lives will move outdoors in a big way. I like to project in the spring for one 'wild card' vegetable that we will grow for the first time; last year's red cabbage was a smashing success!"

Simon Couture, Director Finance

"Longer days and warmer weather give me a boost!"

Andrea McComb, Director, Professional Learning & Development

"I love hearing the birds. My birthday is in early spring and so as a young child I always thought the birds came to sing happy birthday to me. The thought still brings a smile to my face."

David Nelson, Director, Member Support Services

"Spring helps boost my well-being as I get out into my garden instead of sitting inside on the couch."

Rochelle Morandini, Director, Member Health & Well-Being

"The clock change brings brighter evenings that motivate me to go outdoors after dinner. The smell of new grass and garden soil, the sounds of the birds, the sight of emerging flower buds, and the feel of warmer breezes brings me such joy. I feel that spring cleans the winter cobwebs from my mind."

Sources

<https://cbtprofessionals.com.au/spring-into-mental-health-the-psychological-effects-of-the-season/>

<https://cmhasaskatoon.ca/5-tips-to-managing-mental-health-in-the-spring/>

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Morandini', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rochelle Morandini

Member Health & Well-Being, Director

If you would like to contribute or have ideas about what you would like to see in the ReFresh series, we would love to hear from you: contact rochelle@bcpvpa.bc.ca.