

## The worst snow in years, plus a pandemic? No wonder we all have the winter blues.

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By [Jessica Remo | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com](#)

Aren't you just loving [this New Jersey winter](#)? The [shoveling!](#) The cold! The unrelenting grayness!

(I'll pause for collective groaning.)

If you're feeling winter fatigue ever more acutely this year, know this: You are in good company.

"Although we are familiar with having fewer things to do in winter, the activities we normally engage in have been significantly compromised due to COVID — coupled with [a lot of snow](#)," says Dr. Anthony Tasso, a clinical psychologist and deputy director of the School of Psychology and Counseling at [Fairleigh Dickinson](#). "So yes, the winter fatigue has definitely been more pronounced this year."

When I asked on Facebook if folks had felt a bit, well, over it, the responses poured in faster than the snowfall — a collection of "sick of it," "I'm so done," and "I'm ready to move."

"100 percent, absolutely cannot take it anymore," said a mom navigating three teens in [hybrid learning](#) plus a toddler. "I am beyond spent. Dear god, bring on summer, and at least we can go do things outside."

Can you relate?

The effects aren't just psychological but physiological too, says Dr. Jill Hup, a family medicine practitioner with Summit Medical Group.

"There are physiologic and emotional changes in our bodies when the weather changes, and we are exposed to less daylight," says Hup. "Some people are more susceptible than others, but it is very common, especially in the Northern Hemisphere."

Common symptoms of winter fatigue are actually symptoms of depression, she says — feeling down, having low energy, changes in appetite, being irritable or losing interest in doing things you normally would do for fun.

"When it's snowing outside, we feel like we should be taking a walk and looking at snowflakes or going sledding with our kids, but for people with winter fatigue that's the last thing they want to do," Hup says.

And this year, the situation is compounded.

"We have been facing what I would consider [a harsher winter and a seemingly longer winter than usual](#)," Hup says. "But all of this is superimposed on the underlying, really significant stressor of COVID-19, so that has magnified the fatigue for a lot of people."

Complicating things even more is that the pandemic has made some coping strategies more difficult if not impossible, she says.

“One of the things we would usually recommend for treatment of this is pushing yourself to see and connect with other people, to socialize, to go to the gym, and obviously we can’t recommend that this year,” Hup says.

So what to do instead?

Hup recommends getting any amount of sunlight you can, even if it requires bundling up.

“We haven’t had a whole lot of sun breaking through the clouds in New Jersey for the last few weeks, but on those rare days when it is sunny, we really encourage people to go outside, even if it is just to go walk around the block. It really does the body good.”

And, of course, any kind of exercise, she adds.

“It doesn’t mean being an Olympic athlete,” Hup says. “It could be putting on your favorite music and dancing in your kitchen or putting on a YouTube video to do a 12-minute body weight workout on the ground, or just some stretching. Those types of things always make us feel better from the inside out, causing endorphins to circulate through our bloodstream and really helping to change our mood.”

And if getting off the couch isn’t in the cards right now, try venturing inward, Hup says, by journaling about the things you’d like to do — plant flowers, go to the Shore, whatever it is — when the weather gets nicer. It’s an easy way to give yourself something to look forward to.

And if all else fails, there’s always this:

“One of the mantras that we’ve adopted at Summit Medical Group during the pandemic is reminding yourself that this is all ‘just for now,’” Hup says. “Those three words have been really powerful for me, but also for my patients. Whenever you feel like winter is interminable, and COVID-19 is interminable, take a deep breath and remind yourself this winter is just for now, and this pandemic is just for now. Better times are ahead.”