



The third Monday of January is considered as being the most depressing day of the year. This year, Blue Monday falls on 17 January.

A number of factors have been cited as affecting our mental health on this particular day of the year following the festive period such as money worries, debt, relationship issues, loneliness and failing to stick to new year's resolutions.

Interestingly, there is no scientific evidence to support Blue Monday and there is no evidence that any one particular day of the year is more depressing than any other. However, despite that, we may find January to be a struggle due to waving goodbye to the festive period for another year and the continuous long winter nights.

Here are some of the ways that we focus on our mental health to avoid getting too caught up in the media's portrayal of Blue Monday.

Practice being grateful

Being grateful helps us to appreciate the positive aspects of our lives and therefore encourages us to focus on the positives rather than the negatives.

What are you grateful for today? Reflecting on this question on a regular basis or when we feel that things are getting on top of us is a healthy way of remaining positive when things may be tough.

Think about what makes you happy

When we need a boost, taking the opportunity to think about what makes us happy can be helpful. Things that make us happy can include our favourite songs, our favourite things to do or our favourite places to visit.

Try making plans for the year ahead to do the things that make you happy with the people that make you happy. Having plans in place and having things to look forward to helps us to manage how we are feeling and remain upbeat during the darker winter nights.

Make realistic resolutions

When a new year comes around, we have a tendency to set ourselves unrealistic goals and then beat ourselves up when we fail. Instead, we can aim to make small and achievable resolutions and build that up as we make good progress.

If you don't manage to stick your new year's resolutions, don't beat yourself up. Almost half of resolutions fail in the first couple of weeks so you are not alone. View the 'failure' as being a positive thing - you tried something new and had the motivation to try it in the first place. Instead, reflect on why you didn't manage to keep the resolution and come up with a new action plan to make it more achievable.

Make time for your mental health

Many of us remember to focus on our physical health but we don't often set aside much time for our mental health. Our mental health is equally as important as our physical health.

This year, why not consider taking healthy steps towards your mental wellbeing by taking up meditation or mindfulness? Most of us rush through life without stopping to notice much around us. This year, perhaps we could benefit from paying more attention to the present moment.

Mindfulness can help us enjoy life more and understand ourselves better. If you haven't already, we recommend downloading the Health Assured App to learn more about mindfulness and the benefits that can bring.

However you feel on Blue Monday, let's take some time to reflect on the year ahead and start making plans to ensure that it's our healthiest and happiest year yet. Please remember that our Employee Assistance Programme which is provided by Health Assured remains available to all our employees. Health Assured can provide support on a wide range of wellbeing issues.

Health Assured can be contacted 24/7 on 0800 028 0199 where professionally qualified counsellors are available to take your call and provide confidential advice and support on any issue that may be concerning you. There is no cost to you for accessing the service.