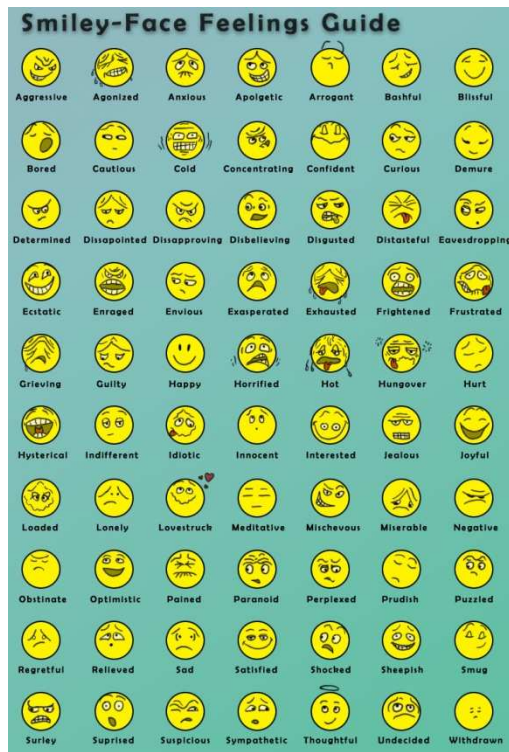


The Ho - Hums

Ever wonder why when we reach the end of October we kinda start to get the doldrums, bored or shall we say cabin fever, along with being stressed, frustrated, tired, anxious and depressed?



Part of this feeling has a scientific and physical reason – the days are getting shorter, which plays havoc on our systems. Switching back to standard time just makes matters worse. It’s colder outside so we tend to stay inside more, we eat more while becoming more sedentary.

Then there is this string of holidays: Halloween, Thanksgiving, Hanukah, Christmas and New Year’s. The stores in my area started decorating just before Halloween for this! Now couple this with all of the “hurry and buy, buy, buy” of advertizing (psychological button pushing) that appears to be more than (or equal to) the actual programming time on TV and radio or in that newspaper or magazine.



All of this physical and psychological stuff leads us to try and keep up with the; “beautiful people, with the beautiful house and the fantastic meals, clothes, decorations and gifts; with a big fat smile on our face” for some 60+ consecutive days!



And people actually wonder why so many of us often get irritable, depressed, frustrated and anxious! There is even a name for this now called SAD, yep “Seasonal Affective Disorder”. SAD even has a summer version called “summer depression” or “reverse SAD”. Go figure.



Now add to this that once holidays are over its back to the old grind with the stress of “how long is it going to take me to pay off this set of holiday bills?” panic and it is even colder out, so we become more sedentary, eat more and get bored out of our gourds!

"When making your choice in life, do not neglect to live."

Samuel Johnson



Tips to Beat the Feelings:

So how do we fight these feelings? To me it just means facing the reality that there are more things/people around us that we *cannot control* and a few that we can – so actively take control of what we can and accept the ones we can't and/or avoid them when possible. In essence *we can only control how we respond/react to these “uncontrollable things” but not the “uncontrollable things” themselves.*

This advice is just like the Serenity Prayer and I can tell you right now that it works for just about every acquaintance, friend and family member I know.

Most of us know this prayer as:

*God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference.*

However the original, written by theologian Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971) in the late 1930s to early 1940s, which his family suggests that Niebuhr wrote the prayer as part of a sermon he was giving. AA adopted the prayer as part of its “12 Step” program. It goes like this:

*God, give us grace to accept with serenity
the things that cannot be changed,
Courage to change the things
which should be changed,
and the Wisdom to distinguish
the one from the other.
Living one day at a time,
Enjoying one moment at a time,
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace,
Taking, as Jesus did,
This sinful world as it is,
Not as I would have it,
Trusting that You will make all things right,
If I surrender to Your will,
So that I may be reasonably happy in this life,
And supremely happy with You forever in the next.*

No matter if you believe in a higher power, the Force, God, and Creator, Mother/Father Earth or not makes no never mind; the actual information in this prayer is FACT. *We cannot change how we feel about things or people or*

events, we can only change how we act and react to them. To do that not only requires identifying them, it also requires a plan to change what we can, adjust to what we cannot and thereby not get irritated, frustrated, depressed, anxious or hopeless when we run across these unchangeable things.

“Dreams are necessary to life.” Anais Nin

Here are some of the things I do and some suggestions from the “experts” on fighting these emotions:

- First off remember that we are human beings and we can't make anything happen in an instant or overnight.
- Next keep in mind that in order to feel good and take care of others or anything else we have to take care of ourselves first and foremost.

Try to get an adequate amount of sleep every night

Without adequate sleep, we are more susceptible to those negative messages and feelings and less able to do good things on our own behalf. Maintain a routine for bedtime; same time of night, bath, reading an hour before retiring and the like.

- *If you're struggling with insomnia*, make sure your bedroom is "optimized" for sleep. It should be a place for rest, not stimulation. Get rid of anything related to work and other sources of worry, such as paperwork and bills. If you keep a TV or computer in your bedroom, move it somewhere else. When it's time to turn out the lights, cover up digital clocks - those glowing numbers that keep you constantly aware of how late it's getting and of how much sleep you're missing. Do your best to block all light sources; the goal is to create a space of total darkness. When I've had trouble sleeping, I've hung heavy blankets over my windows to block out light from street lamps and passing cars. I know this sounds crazy, but sometimes, you need to get a little weird in order to get some good sleep.
- In the hour before bedtime, turn off the TV, put away your work and *relax* with a good book, some needlepoint or a crossword puzzle, etc. Take a warm bath and listen to soothing music. This ritual will help you fall asleep more quickly and experience a more restful slumber, resulting in more energy and happy feelings the following day.
- Set your alarm 15 minutes earlier. This way, you don't anticipate having to jump out of bed and rush through your morning.
- It's just as important to prepare yourself mentally as physically for your day. You can begin your morning by lying in bed, slowly waking up. Mentally clicking off what you're going to wear, what you're going to do, what you're going to have for breakfast. These few minutes in bed, before anyone else is up, are all yours.
- In the morning stretch every extremity for 15 seconds. Try this even before you open your eyes. Lift your arm and begin by stretching each finger, then your hand, then your wrist, then your arm. Then move on to the other arm. Then your toes, feet, ankles, and legs. Finally, end with a neck and back stretch that propels

you out of the bed. You've just limbered up your muscles and joints and enhanced the flow of blood through your body, providing an extra shot of oxygen to all your tissues.

Eat Right and make good nutrition easy

Good nutrition is essential to our body's physical and psychological well being. This may be tricky if your appetite is down or disrupted. Our bodies need to take in enough calories and nutrients to give it the physical and emotional strength it requires.

- So purchase healthy, appealing foods that require little or no preparation: soups, fruit, string cheese, yogurt, whole-grain cereal, etc. If you can't manage to eat full meals, you can still get a good portion of the calories you need daily from nutritious snacks and light meals. If you tend to overeat this time of year try and limit the "grazing foods" to healthy stuff. Like: carrot and celery sticks (splurge on the dip) or make your own "100 calorie" cookies and treats using things like nuts and dried fruit. You'll be less likely to reach for that box of donuts or whatever.
- Eat a bowl of all-bran cereal. It contains 792 milligrams of phosphorous, an important mineral that the body needs to metabolize carbohydrates, fat and protein so they can be used as energy.
- Eat every four hours. It's much better to continually refuel your body before it hits empty than to wait until you're in the danger zone and then overdo it. So every four hours (except, of course, when you're sleeping), have a mini-meal or snack. A mini-meal might be a handful of roasted peanuts, a hard-boiled egg or slice of lean luncheon meat and a sliced apple. Nonfat yogurt sprinkled with flaxseeds makes a great snack.
- Don't forget your daily vitamins, food and or herbal supplements either and keep in mind that these do not have to be taken in the morning when you wake up, you can take them anytime during waking hours.

Get exercise - any way you can

Most of us have a hard enough time getting exercise regularly during the rest of the year and the intensity of the holidays just makes this worse.

- So make yourself walk around the block, down the street or around the office, at least *every other day* for 5-10 minutes. Set a moderately brisk pace. Or dance, jog, or bike during this time.
- When at work try sitting in place calisthenics in your chair or take a walk around your office building at lunch.

Exercise will provide your brain with a natural high (endorphins) that will relieve stress and help you feel better. According to the "experts" a resistance and aerobic combo seems better than aerobic exercise alone. Workouts with a meditative focus, such as tai chi and yoga, are also good.

Don't take on too much or over schedule

We are NOT Superman or Superwoman! Putting too much on our plates will just add to the stress, which will add to all those other feelings we are trying to avoid, so it is important not to over schedule our time and take on more

than we can manage. If you have complicated tasks to perform at work or at home, break them up into manageable pieces. And remember: *It's OK to slow down a bit; you don't have to be working at 100% ALL the time!*



- When someone asks you to do something, say, "Let me check my schedule and I'll get back to you." This gives you time to think about the request and decide if it's something you really want to do or simply an energy-sucking waste of your time.
- Create a "just say no" notebook. Overextending yourself, especially to do tasks you don't really enjoy, stalls out your energy engines and puts our emotions into a funk. If you don't want to bake for another bake sale or help that friend with a home improvement project, say so. Keep some excuses in a notebook that you can use. Include legitimate reasons like you're reserving time for your daily walks.



Put off big decisions

This is NOT the time to make major changes—even ones that you think will make you happier. Spending more, making a move, changing jobs and the like, this time of year just adds to all the other chaos we are fighting both physically and mentally. Believe me, I learned this the hard way, you will regret it!

Think Positive and Stop blaming yourself

- Our thoughts are what cause the distress and emotions we feel, so if we change our thoughts we can change our feelings. Keep thinking that the "glass is half full rather than half empty".
- Do not mentally berate yourself for missteps, either real or imagined. Avoid: "I should have done this differently" or "If only I would have done that" as they are counterproductive and whack us emotionally.
- Read a motivational quote every morning. This can provide a mindset for the day, a sort of self-talk that keeps you motivated in the right direction, as opposed to the negative thinking of say - the morning news. Or use a motivational mantra that provides a meditation-like burst of "feel good" emotions, read or recite a poem that helps you focus, like Rudyard Kipling's "If."

Limit Alcohol

With all the various celebrations this time of year this is difficult to do, *yet it must be done*. If one is down or depressed, alcohol and non-doctor prescribed drugs are a *big no-no*. They act as an accelerant to depression. Your mood *will only* get deeper and darker.

- Enjoy the holiday spirits and limit yourself to one drink every 4-6 hours, munch healthy as you drink. Nurse and savor it throughout the event.
- Splurge and make it something you like but usually don't drink because of the expense or whatever.

Be thankful and have an attitude of gratitude

Although it sounds simplistic, research suggests that for many, gratitude is a road to greater happiness. There are people out there having a worse time of it than you and me. They may have lost their job or home or loved ones. They may be living in a war torn area or in some other stressful situation. The grass is *NOT* always greener on the other side of the fence!

- Take the time each day to be grateful for what you do have and stop dwelling on what you do not have or want.
- Stop comparing yourself to the neighbor or acquaintance with the lake cabin, the talented kids and the Mercedes or whatever.
- Write down three things you're grateful for every night—including the barista who remembered the extra foam on your latte.
- Practice *Random Acts of Kindness* - A six-week study of college students found that practicing five "random acts of kindness" throughout the week led to higher reports of happiness vs. five kind acts performed just one day a week.

Avoid and Manage stress

- Develop stress-busting strategies, such as exercise, yoga, Pilates, meditation, acupuncture or dance and the like. Chronic stress can actually cause physical changes in the brain, which can affect moods and emotions.
- List all the people you're angry with and write each a letter of forgiveness (you don't have to actually send it, simply writing it is enough). Stewing over past events only drains your energy and clogs the brain with negative feelings. So don't expend a lot of effort on changing them, instead try to accept others for who they are.
- Turn off CNN and Fox News for one week. Depressing television news of murders, fires and terrorism can quickly drain our mental reserves. If you're a news junkie, try this experiment for one week: Stop reading your newspaper and watch only one television news program a day (or none if you can stand it). Notice how you feel at the end of the week. If you feel more energetic and peaceful, stick to your new habit.
- Make a list of every relationship in your life and rank how those relationships make you feel, from 1 (terrible) to 5 (fabulous). Bad relationships are known energy sappers and good emotion inhibitors. Take note of the relationships that don't add any positive energy and develop plans to adroitly remove yourself from them.
- For truly relaxing mornings, reduce the number of choices and decisions you make to zero. Either make your morning decisions the night before: what clothes to wear, what breakfast to eat, what route to take to work and so on, or "routinize" as much of your morning as possible. (There's no need to vary your breakfast, timetable, or bathroom ritual from one morning to the next.)

"For a man who does not work, there can be no leisure." - Josef Pieper

Maintain a daily routine

This time of year is hectic and stressful enough as it is, so sticking to a regular routine as much as possible is a very important tool to keep our frustration and irritations down and our physical and mental well being up.

- Create a mail-sorting center. Clutter is not only distracting, it's frustrating and energy-wasting. To keep track of your bills and other mail, buy an open file box or hanging files from an office supply store. Place it in your kitchen and use it to sort your mail into categories such as "bills," "receipts," and "letters." When you know where your bills are, you can pay them on time, thus reducing frustration and stress.
- Keep a wicker basket for yourself and each child by the front or back door. Into it go your keys, wallet, purse, and the child's backpack, papers, gloves, hats, etc. This will prevent that frantic last-minute scouring of the house as you look for lost items.
- Schedule specific times and or days for alone time, spouse time, hobby time and the like.

Discover and do what you enjoy and make some alone time

Whatever that is; it could be reading a book, going for a run, investing time with friends or even gazing at the moon. With our full activity schedules, it's complicated to take time for the basic joys of life so set aside a few moments to smell a rose or enjoy a sunset and the like. When we commit the time to enjoy ourselves we improve our outlook. My grandmother always said: *"The precious things in life take time and effort even when right in front of us; Hence their value; The not so precious are easy to see and often drop in our laps."*

- Moments alone are beneficial for clearing out the cobwebs. Meditation or chat to God or even yourself. I often find that with these moments I can reconnect with myself and find peace.
- If you need help to make time for yourself, ask your family to assist so you can achieve some "alone time" each week. Or if you are really just totally fed up, ask them to take up the slack around the home so that you can invest in a day away at a spa or on a weekend retreat to get yourself rested and focused again. Family members usually love to help if we but ask.
- Make a list of everything you're looking forward to in the next month. Do this at the same time every month, like when you pay your rent or mortgage. Simply building more anticipation into your life helps stoke your energy.
- Spend 5 to 10 minutes each morning listening to music or sitting on the deck or porch just thinking. This allows the creative thinking that takes place during the night to gel and form into a plan of action.

Keep in touch with your emotions and feelings

- Keep a journal and write down how you are feeling on a particular day and define as best you can, why you feel that way.
- Reach out to trusted friends and family even if it is a brief phone call to say "I was just thinking of you" or send an electronic card to that person or talk to a counselor or religious leader.

- If you are really frustrated or mad, go someplace like the garage or attic and just scream for the hell of it. Or better yet get a punching bag that you can kick and scream at.
- If you feel hopeless or sad go to that garage or attic and take a timer with you. Then give yourself a specific amount of time to just cry in peace.
- Squelch envy. Envy is the only one of the seven deadly sins that has no redeeming qualities whatsoever. And it is toxic when it comes to happiness.
- Get out of yourself. Get out of your head. Do not ever use the term 'personal happiness' unless you're using it ironically. Happiness is not personal; it's relational. Think of your happiness in terms of relationships with other people - family, friends, co-workers, strangers or, if you want to be metaphysical, your relationship with the universe or Mother Earth, etc.
- Kiss all the people you love in your house (including the dog and cat) at least once a day, like when heading out the door to schools or work. Connecting with the ones you love soothes.

Identify your fears and then plot to master them

“Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear – not absence of fear.” Mark Twain

Fears, real or imagined add stress to our lives and as stress builds it leads to all kinds of other negative emotions and physical issues. This time of year we “fear” not being as happy as so-in-so or that we won’t have the best decorated house, won’t throw the best party or give and receive the best gifts. When the holidays the results of 60+ days of this fear drains us and puts our emotions into a slump.

The purpose of fear is to protect us from life threatening circumstances. Yet when there is no direct threat to life, but we perceive a threat to our life as we know it, fear hinders us and not in a good way. This kind of fear has often been labeled: **F**-False, **E**-Evidence, **A**-Appearing, **R**-Real.

All humans have inherited from ancient times a reptilian side of our brain that triggers a well known instinct which instantly installs a state of alertness. This signal can say “danger” but it can also say “you are entering new territory”, which, means expansion and growth. When we become afraid this instinct is triggered big time no matter what the “threat” appears to be.

The plan to master fear

- *Name it.* We tend to keep it secret most of the time; run from it, try to avoid it, to ignore it, or to tranquilize it. The best approach is to express it. To look it in the eyes. Write it down, simple and clear. Usually just by putting it into words, it loses a lot of the nightmare and hold it has on us.
- *Face the worst case scenario:* Just for a minute, ask yourself what’s the worst that can happen? What would you do to deal with it, if you would absolutely have to? Write this down.
- *See it for what it is.* It can be a warning or a signal you are growing (which has a fantastic positive connotation in and of itself).

- *Reframe it.* Rephrase what you wrote down your fear was and turn it into “*I want to do this, but I scare myself by thinking ... (negative thing that might or might not happen)*” or something similar. This helps to put things into a new perspective and one often with a more controllable set of actions.
- *Bet on the good outcome and visualize it.* Believe in the chance of all turning out to be just fine and try to take a few steps in that direction. Close your eyes and visualize preparing the way for the good and successful outcome. Use the “*think positive and the desired result is all the more probable*” theory, it often works.
- Once you are aware of the name of the fear, its true size and the chance or odds of it actually are; then in your mind you can walk through the fear and all of the preparations quickly. This way the next time this fear approaches you can *Act and act quickly.*
- Then through visualization act again. The more you do it, the less fear you’ll have.

“If it is to be, it is up to me.”

William H. Johnsen

Depression-era realist/impressionist painter

Take care of your Spiritual Health

Whatever your spirituality is, devote some time to it every day. Our scientists and experts may not be able to prove, undisputedly, that this is calming and healing, but keep in mind they cannot disprove it either!

Fight the low energy rut

- *Nurse a coffee throughout the day.* Compelling research from Brigham and Women's Hospital, Harvard Medical School and other institutions finds that frequent low doses of caffeine - the amount in a quarter-cup of coffee, were more effective than a few larger doses of caffeine in keeping people alert.
- *Lighten your glycemic load.* Foods with a low glycemic load, like; beans, bran cereal, brown rice, whole wheat bread and nuts have less impact on your blood sugar than foods with a high glycemic load like; white rice, spaghetti, potatoes, cornflakes and sugary juices and drinks. Eating more low-glycemic-load foods will help us keep our blood sugar steady and avoid the lightheadedness and "shakes" associated with blood sugar drops (which usually follow spikes).
- If you have *dried rosemary* in your kitchen, crush a small handful and take a whiff or three. The herb's intense woody fragrance is known to herbalists as an invigorating stimulant.
- *Drink two glasses of icy water.* Fatigue is often one of the first symptoms of dehydration and if all you've sipped all day is coffee and soft drinks, it's quite likely you're dehydrated. Plus, the refreshing coldness will serve as a virtual slap in the face.
- *Soak a washcloth in icy water and place it over your face.* The icy coolness of the washcloth will quickly rejuvenate your facial muscles and eyes. It likely will lift your spirits as well.
- *Get enough iron.* If you are constantly dragging yourself around, you could have iron-deficiency anemia, a common cause of fatigue. Iron is essential for producing hemoglobin, which carries oxygen to our body's cells, where it is used to produce energy. Good food sources of iron are: red meat, iron-fortified cereal, green leafy vegetables and dried beans. You may also need a supplement; check with your doctor.

- *Have your thyroid checked.* If it's not producing enough thyroid hormone, it could be making you feel tired and run-down. A simple blood test will tell. Other symptoms of low thyroid are: dry skin, weight gain, constipation and feeling cold.
- *Soak up a little sun in winter* whenever you can. Make a point of getting outside for at least 10-15 minutes, but shoot for 30 to an hour, during the day. The natural light can improve your energy level and help fight seasonal affective disorder, aka “the winter blahs”.
- *Breathe in new energy.* Sit in a chair with a straight back. Place your hands over your stomach and breathe into your tummy so that your hands rise and fall with your breath. Imagine you are inhaling a white light that fills your body with vital energy. Do this for five full breaths. Then, as you inhale, tighten the muscles that connect your shoulders and neck, pulling your shoulders up toward your ears. When I worked in an office I did this several times a day and by golly it works!
- *Eat something crunchy.* Pretzels, carrots and other crunchy foods make your jaw work hard, which can wake up your facial muscles, helping you feel more alert.
- *Chew a piece of peppermint or spearmint gum.* You'll get a burst of energy from the invigorating flavor and scent, not to mention the physical act of chewing.
- *Stay still.* You wouldn't think stillness would lead to energy, but often that's just what we need to create our second wind. Simply sit for 10 minutes in a comfortable chair and stare out the window. Let your mind drift wherever it wants to go. Some might call this meditation, I just call it "being," something we're often too frenzied to remember to do.
- *Or stretch.* Stand up, get on your toes, and lift your fingertips as close as you can to the ceiling. Keep the stretch expanding for several seconds, feeling it in your calves, your abdomen, your shoulders, your arms, your fingers. After a few seconds, relax, take a few deep breaths, and do it again. By doing this, you activate almost every muscle you have, sending oxygen-rich blood throughout your body.
- *Brush your tongue for one minute.* Remember the “Fonz” on Happy Days? There's no better way to rid yourself of morning breath and begin your day minty fresh and clean. After all, more than 300 types of bacteria take up residence in your mouth every night.
- *Drink eight ounces of water.* You've been fasting all night and you wake each morning dehydrated.

Do one “nutty” thing every once in a while

I know this sounds crazy, however for me getting out there and flying a kite or riding an inner tube down a small hill is just fun and nutty enough to let me know that even at 50 something I am still alive and kicking!

“A person who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new.” Albert Einstein

Push Back the Winter Blahs, Boredom and Cabin Fever

This is the time for ingenuity and inventiveness, especially if you have children or live in a rather rural or isolated area. Below are some of the things I and others have done. Hope they spark some ideas for you too.



- *Get off the couch.* If the TV doesn't pique your interest, try taking the dog for a walk, visiting a park, planting a container garden, star gazing, or going to the library to fight boredom. All of these things can help you learn something new and get the blood flowing for a heightened mood.
- *Do something different:* Sleep on the opposite side of the bed; Drive a different route to work or school; learn an instrument, painting, woodworking, cooking
- *Plan a special meal once a week.* It will give you something to look forward to.
- *Finish any unfinished craft projects or start a new one.* Check thrift stores for inexpensive supplies. If you crochet, knit, quilt or sew, look for a charity to donate to, such as Project Linus (www.projectlinus.org) or Newborns in Need (www.newbornsinneed.org), or contact your local hospital to see how you can help. You can make blankets, hats, undershirts for babies in ICU or Isolette covers (www.vipreemie.com/isolettepattern.html) that can comfort children who are seriously ill or traumatized. Or make such items as catheter bag covers, wheelchair caddies or slippers for adults.
- *Look for classes that interest you* at your local craft store, gym, community center or community college and take a class. It's a great way to interact with other people.
- *Go to your hobbies.* You can always read books, do puzzles, or cook. These can help fight boredom and bring a smile to your face. If you are a fan of all of these things but get bored with the same ones, try making your own. Write a story or poem, make your own crossword or jigsaw puzzle, or create a cookbook for friends and family.
- *Do a little dance.* Turn some music on and move around. Dancing can help get your mind working on a new way to fight boredom. If dancing isn't your thing, turn the music on and really listen to it. Try a new band or a new style of music.
- *Go to the gym.* Spend some quality time working out a reasonable diet and exercise plan and prepare yourself to stick to it. This will help you find something to do on a daily basis as well as take care of your body. Then spend some time working out at the gym. You will feel much better when you are done.
- *Go to a museum or aquarium or zoo* (just do the indoor exhibits)
- *Join a club or Community Group.* Book, quilt, model planes, knitting, sewing, canning or whatever. Form one if you can't find one.
- *Organize:* CD's, DVD's, tapes, drawers, closets, cabinets and the like.
- *Sell something* you found cleaning out all those cabinets, drawers and closets on Craig's List, eBay or give it away by putting it on FreeCycle.
- *Write an article* on one of your favorite subjects and publish it on the web via: www.AssociatedContent.com or www.scribd.com.



- **Board and card games:** Yahtzee, Kismet, Sorry, Risk, Trivia Pursuit, Scrabble, Clue, Stratego and the like. *Come on now, everything can't be electronic all the time and what if the electricity goes out or the batteries run down?* (Check out <http://www.boardgamecentral.com/>; <http://www.pagat.com/> & <http://www.thehouseofcards.com/> has rules to just about every card game out there)
- **Puzzles:** Crossword puzzles, other word puzzles/ciphers or jigsaw puzzles.
- Rent a movie.
- Read a book (and try to pick a light, fun one)
- *Do those projects* around the house you've been meaning to do but haven't gotten to yet. Paint, repair and clean.
- *Take a walk in the snow*, this is especially nice right after a good storm stops.
- Go to an indoor spa or treat yourself to a good facial or hair job. *Anything you don't normally do.*
- Ice Fishing, snow shoeing or learn to cross country ski (much cheaper than downhill)
- **Try the web:** There are even sites out there with kid's games! *DrawAhouse* (<http://www.drawahouse.com/>). This website is extremely addicting for me. I actually started playing this when I was looking to confirm a blue print I have for my dream home. The basic idea of this site is you draw a house, simple enough, and then after you draw your house, you get a personality analysis from the drawing. No joke. To quote one reviewer; "It's almost as if you are merging two aspects of your life, the first is your childlike nature to just sit and draw stupid things and the second is the longing to know how you actually work - what your personality actually is like."; *Watch a Magazine Cover Get Retouched* (<http://demo.fb.se/e/girlpower/retouch/>). This website is for bored people who want to be stimulated intellectually and socially. At this website you will discover how a fashion photographer can take an ordinary looking girl and turn her into a front-cover BABE; *I am bored* (<http://www.i-am-bored.com>). This site has thousands of links taking you to joke sites, funny videos and *questionable* photographs. It can get addicting to the point of spending HOURS on this site; www.Bored.com, Is always growing with new content including games, music, tests, movies and so much more. This is one of my favorites; *Beat Darth Vader* (<http://www.sithsense.com/flash.htm>). This puzzle game is incredibly addicting. Basically the point of the game is Darth will ask you questions and then he will try to guess what you are thinking. Sound lame? Well, surprisingly it isn't. Darth Vader is correct about 80% of the time; *The Skeleton Dance Video* (<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=3622972800658295263&q=skeleton>). We all know how much American's love dancing things. First there was the hamster and "baby" and now, there is the dancing skeleton. This is for those of us who like a little groove added to our lives and it's guaranteed to spark a, "Hey Joe, come over and look at this...it's kinda funny."
- **Play with the kids.** See below for more detail.



When my kids were young we often:

- *Camped* in the house and fort building
- *Scavenger & treasure hunts* (I kept chocolate "coins" in the freezer for this) kinda like an indoor Easter egg hunt.
- Baked
- Painted
- Wrote and acted in their own play, complete with the "set"



- *Kids board and card games* - Candyland, Checkers, Go Fish, etc.
- Kid movies
- Sing along music
- Made a scrapbook
- Organized pictures from our last vacation
- Indoor Picnic Adventure
- Build a Time Capsule
- Tell a Tall Tale
- Music and dance
- Who am I dress up
- *Coloring books* or purchase a roll of coloring paper and draw a story or comic book
- Break out the bubble wrap and go nuts
- *Sock puppets* - I kept a bag of unmatched socks, scrapes of fabric, yarn and odd buttons for this. A few good magic markers help too.
- Went to the local soup kitchen and helped to serve lunch
- *Visit museums & other "kid only" Touristy type places*
- *Go to the train station or airport* and watch people, etc. coming and going
- *Go to a Library or book store story hour*
- Visit the tallest building around and ride the elevator to the top
- Request a tour of the local *fire station*
- Use a bus, subway or train to get to one or more indoor attractions.
- *Make cards* for upcoming birthdays and holidays.

- *The Lava Game* (only one room was designated for this) Imagine that the floor is covered in hot lava, and encourage your child to figure out how to get across the house without touching the floor.
- *Indoor snowball fight* with cotton balls
- *Some indoor science experiments*: polish pennies with lemon juice, watch yeast grow and fizz. Search the web for other easy experiments.
- Blow bubbles
- Set up a store with play money and groceries
- *Shoe Box Relay Race* (look it up it's out there on the web, mu kids loved it)
- *Snowball Throw* (fight) with rules - like No Ice Balls!
- Make a *snowman or winter scarecrow* if you don't have enough snow
- *Collect pine cones* and add peanut butter and bacon fat then go and hang on the trees and bushes and watch the birds.
- *Make a "Plans for Spring Poster"*. The kids draw out what they would like to do come spring. Couple this with an Until Spring Calendar and they can X off each day approaching spring.
- Use Borax and Pipe Cleaners to *make snowflakes*.
- *Create an Indoor Sandbox* with some plastic tubs and a tarp or old plastic table cloth. Have the kids bring out their shells and beach bucket and shovel, etc. and make a sand castle.
- *Sand Painting*. With some sand, food coloring and a cookie sheet.
- Homemade play dough
- *Indoor travel*: Make sand castles out of a little flour mixed with water. Hide a plastic crab in a bowl of oats and see who can dig it up. Wear your swimsuits. Get out the goggles and put your head underwater. If your child's not much of a beach person but you're still up for imaginary travels, you can also pull out the atlas, close your eyes, and pick a country. Spain? Well, then, that's your destination. Research the country online, mix up a Spanish tortilla of egg and potato for lunch, and spend a few hours imagining you're visiting the Alhambra or watching a flamenco show, using whatever props you can find or create.
- Push the furniture out of the way, throw down a bunch of pillows and *tumble away*
- Simon Says
- Hide and Seek
- Paper Airplane contest; Make a paper airplane and see who's flies the farthest.
- Pudding Finger painting
- Make instruments out of empty paper tubes, cans, kitchen utensils, pots and pans, etc.

Well now you have my family's and friends tips on how to stop the holiday "*crush and grind*", reduce the frustration and emotional traps of the holiday season and ideas on what to do *after* the holidays to keep your sanity and not be so, well - bored. So go ahead, try a few and tell us how they work for you ;-}

"Today is the Tomorrow that you worried about Yesterday"

TNT