

Ten Ways to Cheer Yourself Up On a Down Day

BY SANDY MAYNARD

"Nothing makes you smile more than putting a smile on the face of someone else."

1 Move! Go for a bike ride, swim, run, play tennis. Get up and get busy. There's a reason they call it a "runner's high." Physical activity makes the brain produce endorphins, the "feel good" chemicals that reduce pain and relieve stress. Just don't quit too soon! The trick is to stay active long enough to give your endorphin-producing brain time to kick in and do its thing.

2 Buy flowers. If you can't get back to nature, then why not bring some of nature back to the office with you? Flowers can brighten a cubicle like nothing else. If you don't feel like giving yourself a dozen roses, then you might try a bouquet of daisies or orchids. You might even want to buy something fragrant that you can dry and use for potpourri.

3 Send a silly gift and/or a card to a friend. Over-sized sunglasses. A singing fish. Maybe a Pez dispenser.... It doesn't have to be expensive or extravagant-it just has to be fun! Nothing makes you smile more than putting a smile on the face of someone else.

4 Watch a favorite movie in your pajamas. Eat popcorn. Repeat as necessary. A chick flick, an action movie, or maybe something from Disney-a good movie takes your mind off troubles.

5 Play jacks. Swing on a swing. Finger paint. In short, be a kid again! It's okay to be a kid for an hour or an afternoon. Think of things that used to make you smile. Chances are, the same things that made you happy when you were a child can still make you happy as an adult. If you have kids, you may want to share the experience with them.

6 Make a gratitude list. It's easy to forget what you have when you're having a down day. Take a moment to list the things in your life that are good. Are you healthy? Do you like your job? Does somebody love you? Sometimes we overlook the things that mean the most to us.

7 Sing a song. Music is another simple skill of childhood that to many of us lose as we get older. If you count a baby's cry as a song, signing is really our first language. Find a favorite radio station and sing along in the car. Sing to yourself in the kitchen, or, if you're really brave, you can sing in front of a crowd. Either way, singing is a great emotional release and an excellent way to cheer yourself up.

8 Get a haircut. Sprucing up the outside can help perk up the inside. If you're really ambitious, you could go for an entire makeover. Make yourself look as attractive, pretty, or professional as you want. You'll feel better, look better, and have a better outlook for the rest of the day.

9 Telephone a friend. Down days have a way of making us feel isolated and alone. You can get past that with a simple phone call to a good friend. While you're at it, make a lunch date or plan something fun to do later. It will give you something to look forward to.

10 Lay in a hammock. If you don't have a hammock, then take a nap on the couch. Down days can be a sign that you're not getting enough rest, a common problem for busy people. Take some time off to recharge your batteries!