

Blue Monday

20th January 2020

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Blue Monday, as many of you will know, is thought of as the most depressing day of the year. It typically falls on the third Monday in January, so will fall on the 20th this year.

The term 'Blue Monday' was first coined in 2004 and since then it has become widely known around the world. You may not be aware that it is also considered to be very controversial in mental health and scientific circles. In the scientific community, the formula used to calculate the most depressing day of the year is considered 'nonsensical' and 'farcical'. Within the mental health community, there are fears that it distorts or minimises and misinforms the general populace on the nature of depression and associated mental ill health conditions. Furthermore, the reason the formula came into existence was on the back of an advertising campaign looking to find the best day to book a summer holiday!

January was chosen as the month to be home to the 'most depressing day' for relatively obvious reasons; the end of the festive season, the departure of loved ones, contending with freezing weather conditions and taking

on New Year's resolutions that can bring about more boredom than satisfaction. Furthermore, there is the financial pinch that often follows the festive period and, for some, the longer than usual gap between pay packets.

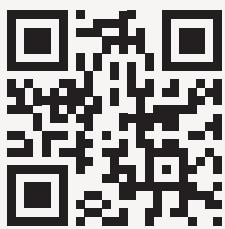
Whilst we could write a (very large!) article looking in more depth at the concept of Blue Monday, this is a good opportunity to look at the principle behind it. There are often occasions in the future that we know will be difficult – plan to make the day as pleasant as possible, or at least try to make sure that it's not as bad as it could be! This is something that we should aspire to do all year round; use foresight and planning to mitigate any difficulties that we may face in the future. We can use this principle for big life events or for the day-to-day mundanities that affect us all. For example, we may decide to increase our pension payments so that our retirement is more comfortable, or simply make plans to see a friend to cheer us up after that dentist appointment we've been dreading next week!

Tips to get you through the January blues:

Watch for signs of stress – these can be physical signs as well as mental signs. If you spot signs that your stress levels are increasing take action to bring them back down again!

Recognise your limits and build your support network – learn to ask for help. People do not always come forward in the fear of being intrusive, let them know their help would be welcome.

Acknowledge your feelings – it is normal to feel angry, resentful and frightened. There is nothing 'wrong' with having these feelings, it's how we react to them that sometimes works against us. If you experience these feelings, motivate yourself to take positive action that benefits you!



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