



Rest Reset Recharge

Photography: Daniel Fraser | Words: Jessica Barret

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Most of us have probably thought at some point – probably on a rainy, cold morning – that we wish it was summer all year round. The idea of endless, long, warm days, and all the fun and festivities that fill them, on a never-ending cycle seems dreamy. But would we really flourish? Doesn't the enforced slower living that winter tends to bring us serve a purpose, too?

In Katherine May's bestselling book, *Wintering*, she explains that a lifetime of summer is rarely possible. 'Life's not like that,' she says. 'Emotionally, we're prone to stifling summers and low, dark winters, to sudden drops in temperature, to light and shade... We [can't] avoid the winter.'

Instead of dreading the winter, perhaps we can learn there are positives to the season by

harnessing the power of rest and relaxation, and looking forward to our period of "hibernation", so that we enter spring feeling renewed.

This isn't always easy, admittedly. While British winters are punctuated with chinks of light to keep us going – Christmas, New Year's Eve and Valentine's Day – they are also a time of uphill struggle for many, with dark evenings, cold, wet weather and cloudy days not helping. Also this year, staying in and doing nothing to save money may be taking the place of packed weekends of shopping and eating out, holidays or socialising.

But like Katherine says in her book, this doesn't have to be a bad thing. It can be possible to learn to reframe a less busy or fun-filled time into something that we emerge from feeling better, more positive and healthier. →



Make mindful choices

Creating a mindful self-care ritual that feels doable, rather than something you dip in and out of, is a must. Gillian McMichael, author of *Coming Home: A Guide to Being Your True Self*, says that by making mindful choices and doing things that prioritise our own needs, winter can be actually one that feels less frazzled and intense.

‘Energy management is essential,’ Gillian explains. ‘The challenge we have is that most of us want to fit in, to be seen to be doing the right things and often put our own needs at the bottom of the list. Mindfulness is about listening

to what you want: what your body, your mind and your emotions need.’

According to Gillian, making time for meditation, walks in nature, or slower-paced exercises, such as pilates, can help. ‘Learn to breathe properly, too – moving beyond shallow breathing to longer, slower and deeper inhales and exhales throughout your day,’ she adds. ‘Stop and focus on your breath three times a day.’

Instead of going into winter filled with dread, Anthony Webb, a mindset coach known as The Brain Whisperer, believes we can still harness our inner positivity even when it feels tougher.

If you don’t know what to pursue in 2023 or have no energy to make your goals a reality, give journaling a chance

‘Acceptance is often the quickest way to dissolve negative emotions brought on by winter weather and our longing for summer. Mother Nature exists for a reason and when we learn to accept this and adapt alongside her, our negative thoughts will begin to dissipate,’ he says. ‘Ultimately, stop trying to change the impossible; recognise the beauty of now and remain present, instead of longing for the past. Accept your current context for what it is, work with the time you have (no matter how short the days may feel) and you will soon be amazed by all that you can accomplish simply by nurturing a more positive mindset.’

Take up a hobby

With less planned activities and events in the diary, you may find yourself trying to fill that extra time, but finding solace in yourself and quiet time away from a busy social schedule doesn’t have to be boring. Use this time to learn a



new skill, such as cooking a recipe you’ve had saved on your phone all year but never got round to making, or teaching yourself something meditative, such as knitting, or doing a 10-minute yoga breathing exercise on YouTube. Journaling is a hobby that some of us may scoff at, but it can be a powerful – and free! – tool for helping with self-improvement and increased mindfulness.

Ilaria Mangiardi, a journaling expert who runs Plan and Play goal-setting writing workshops, says: ‘If you don’t know what to pursue in 2023 or

if you have no energy to make your goals a reality, my advice would be to give journaling a chance.’

The trick is to start small. ‘Set a five-minute timer and write freely. Jot down the first thing that comes to mind, no matter how petty or useless you might think it is. Leave judgement and censorship at the door. Nobody will read what you wrote anyway,’ says Ilaria. ‘You’ll improve awareness, confidence and emotional intelligence. And you’re likely to have tons of epiphanies and changes of perspective.’ →





Turn your beauty regime into a ritual

Of course, self-care isn't just about looking after your mind, but your overall health, including your skincare routine. Quieter evenings are a perfect time to supercharge your beauty regime. Make your skincare routine part of a winding down ritual that calms your mind and prepares you for a good night's sleep.

'Facial massage is the ultimate costs nothing beauty trick and can help boost blood flow to

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your complexion and ease everyday stress symptoms, such as jaw clenching,' says H&B editor, Jo Hoare. Master a few simple strokes and focus on wherever you feel tension in your face. If you're clumsy of hand, add a tool like the **Botanics Rose Quartz Gua Sha**, £xx, and simply build it into your existing oil or night cream application. Make it even more mindful by focusing entirely on the feel, sensation, scent and texture as you go to help calm and soothe your nervous system before bed.

Get a good night's sleep

Most of us find that sleep can feel elusive in any season, but the longer nights are a good time to address your sleep hygiene, according to James Wilson, aka The Sleep Geek. 'When it comes to sleeping and waking, consider where you sit on the sleep type line, which has early types at one end (sometimes known as larks), and later types at the other (can be known as owls),' he says. 'We all sit on this line somewhere and most of us are in the middle with a preference one way or another.

'Once you've considered this, target a sleep time that suits your sleep type, keep your wake-ups consistent with no more than an hour and a half lie in, and get natural light within 30 minutes of waking up (a light box, such as **Beurer TL 50 Desktop Daylight/SAD Lamp**, £99.99, may help with this). Consider whether you are meeting your sleep needs, not just in terms of quantity but quality. Ask yourself if you feel alert and active at 10/11am. If you do, you have probably met your sleep needs.'

Feed your soul

Self-care is also about nourishing the soul with delicious, comforting foods that only come out in the winter. 'It's officially one-pot season – get ready for casserole masterpieces and some →





*Never leave a burning candle unattended

serious stews,' says dietician Dr Caitlin Hall, who is head of Clinical Research at fibre supplement company, Myota. 'Not only can slow cookers transform leftover groceries into hundreds of different recipes, but they are amazing money savers due to their low energy requirements. Try a spicy vegetable stew, or a traditional meat casserole to ensure you're getting the vitamins and proteins needed in the winter months.'

And make eating about nourishing, rather than grabbing processed bites on the go. Dr Hall suggests that we can use a slower-paced life to 'enjoy a moment of peace at mealtimes, focusing on the flavour and textures of food. Not only can food bring our taste buds joy, but chewing it more will help your digestive system properly break down what you eat.'

But most of all this winter, being kind to yourself is a must.

Will Murtha, a transformation coach, believes that the winter is a good time to remember how to be your own best friend. 'Make sure you practise self-compassion,' he says. 'Think of the advice you'd give a close friend if they were feeling the way you are and follow that. This can be soothing things that give you comfort, such as putting on a nice jumper, time alone, reflection time to read a book, having a warm bath, lighting a candle*, or getting out in nature and enjoying the fresh air. Whatever is personal to you that makes you feel good – make time for that and don't feel bad about it.'

Will also often advises his clients to make a list of what enhances their energy and what drains it. 'It's different for everyone, but most of us need time to rest, restore and reset. With darker days, winter is a good time to pause, reflect and focus on "you",' he concludes.

