

***Did You Know?*** A Column from:

Valerie Dripchak, PhD/LCSW

Student Assistance Counselor

Room# 236 - Telephone# 203-236-9817

Okay, if Punxsutawney Phil did not see his shadow on February 2<sup>nd</sup> and predicted an early spring, why aren't we feeling better about this winter weather? We seem to be "stuck" in the middle between post holiday celebrations and before the spring break abyss--- better known as the *Winter Blues*. To make matters worse, we seem to be encountering one of the most severe winters on record.

### **What is the Winter Blues?**

Some of the students here at UConn describe it as "the dark days; "not feeling like doing anything;" "being stuck in one place;" and "FRUSRATION with all the snow, ice and cold." The *Winter Blues* is also defined as changes in feelings, thoughts and behaviors that occur during the winter months for people, who feel okay during other times of the year. The United States National Library of Medicine suggests that some individuals, who have the *Winter Blues* experience a change in their emotions (feeling more sad or irritable); have less energy; get too much sleep; crave carbohydrates, which may lead to weight gain; encounter more difficulties in concentrating or completing tasks; and withdraw from social activities.

Here are some simple tips from the "experts" that may help you through the *Winter Blues*:

1. **Monitor your intake of sugar.** Remember: what you eat can have a big impact on how you feel.
2. **Make yourself go outside during the day,** even if it is only for a few minutes. The vitamin D from the sunlight helps to boost our limbic systems.
3. **Join the gym or ensure you get regular exercise.** It will help to combat against weight gain and make you feel better.
4. **Hang out with your friends.** Don't isolate.

5. **Wear bright colors.** While there is no research to indicate that this may truly help, it does not hurt to brighten up your appearance.
6. **Take up a project of giving to others.** Even though you are all busy balancing school jobs, friends and family, it is well documented that acts of *giving to others* serve to counterbalance the blues.
7. **Focus on some event(s) that are occurring in the near future:** “March Madness,” spring baseball, 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual UConn Waterbury Brass City Dash, etc.

*Lastly, we all need to remember that P. Phil did say that spring will come!*

If these suggestions do not work for you or if you are feeling depressed, it may be time to seek professional help. *Please feel free to contact your student assistance counselor. The services are free and confidential to all UConn-Waterbury students.*