

# BYE BYE NEGATIVE ENERGY!

It's been a winter like no other in recent memory. And while we can't change world events, with a few strategies we can boost our positive vibes. Here's how.

by KATE DALEY | photograph by GEOFFREY ROSS



## 1

### RECOGNIZE THAT IT'S NOT ALL BAD

"It's normal and healthy to experience negativity," says Jamie Gruman, founding member of the Canadian Positive Psychology Association and co-author of *Boost: The Science of Recharging Yourself in an Age of Unrelenting Demands*. In fact, negativity is a survival skill that helps people avoid danger, he explains. Not-so-nice experiences are an important part of helping you better understand and appreciate the good parts of life. Plus, research shows that over the course of a lifetime, people who have moderate adversity in their lives are more resilient, he explains.

## 2

### ACCEPT HARD TIMES

That's something Lisa Bentley knows a lot about. The professional triathlete and author of *An Unlikely Champion* suffers from cystic fibrosis, a fatal lung disease that causes chronic infections. But that hasn't stopped her from pursuing her dreams: She won 11 Ironman triathlons and is now a coach and motivational speaker. "Be thankful for the things that don't go well – that's what creates greatness," says Bentley. "It can definitely take work to see the bright side, but search deeply and you can always find something good in each bit of adversity."

## 3

### RETHINK YOUR CIRCLE

If you have a friend or family member who brings you down, one option is to simply cut ties. But if you can't nix the Debbie Downer from your life, there are other ways to counter those bad vibes. Try to understand why they feel that way, recommends Gruman. Sometimes that person might be experiencing sadness or low self-esteem and being negative feels satisfying for them. Try to talk it out or simply counter their negativity with a smile on your face, says Gruman. Then they may recognize what's happening and stop their behaviour on their own. (And if they don't, do your best to limit your time with them.)



# 4

## COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS

Think about how lucky you are every night before bed, recommends Gruman. Come up with three good things that happened to you that day and write them down – the act of writing can help you focus on the good. Plus, you can look them over when you need a boost. Bentley makes a pros-and-cons list about her life every few weeks and spends extra time thinking up ways to make the pros list more impressive to counter any challenges she faces.



# 5

## WORK FOR MEMORIES

If you have trouble coming up with things to be thankful for and can't seem to pull out of the negativity spiral, make some good things happen. "When you put your head on your pillow at night, do something that reminds you of something great you did that day," says Gruman. "Imagine getting to the end of your life and having a whole novel full of great memories."

# 6

## FIND YOURSELF A MANTRA

Before a potentially negative situation (like a family dinner with a pessimistic in-law), find a motto to repeat. "One of my mottos is 'Attitude is more important than fact,'" says Bentley. It always helped strengthen her resolve during long races if she was lagging behind or feeling uncomfortable.

# 7

## FIND YOUR FUN

Schedule time for activities that bring you joy so that you always have something to look forward to, recommends Gruman. Book a coffee date with your funniest friend, sign up for your favourite workout class or book that holiday a few months out.

# 8

## REFRESH YOUR SURROUNDINGS

You don't need to completely redecorate, but research shows that your environment affects the way you feel. Gruman recommends surrounding yourself with reminders that provide perspective. For example, put a fresh flower or framed photograph of someone you love in your bedroom so that the first thing you see when you wake up in the morning is something beautiful. You can also try healing crystals, a Himalayan rock salt lamp, an aromatherapy diffuser or a leafy houseplant to boost your mood.



# 9

## CREATE A MORNING ROUTINE

How you start your day is so important, says Bentley. She recommends working out, journaling and eating a healthy breakfast (be sure to prep the night before, to avoid hazy morning decision-making). "A strong morning equals a strong mind and a strong body," she says. Exercise can help lift you out of a funk, even temporarily, agrees Gruman. Studies show that even short bouts (think five minutes) of particularly vigorous exercise can have a positive impact on brain function and mood and help pull you out of a mental funk.

# 10

## SET PERSONAL LIMITS

If your negative feelings or interactions have to do with a particular activity, implement a new strategy. For example, if you feel envy or jealousy every time you go on social media, you need to remove yourself from that experience, says Bentley. Unfollow or hide users that make you feel low, turn off notifications, delete the app from your smartphone so that you're less likely to use it or put a hard limit on your usage through an app. Life is too short to spend your time feeling bad about yourself. *BT*