



Top 10 Winter Self-Care Essentials from a Therapist

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As a yoga teacher and therapist, I've seen firsthand the profound impact that simple practices can have on mental well-being. Here are ten essentials I recommend incorporating into your daily life (affiliate links included):

1. Move your body on a good mat

Invest in a good yoga mat and then move! What's a *good* mat? I recommend one that is both supportive (cushy) and firm (not so cushy you're going to twist an ankle). The [Manduka Pro](#) is the best, hand's down, and I own a few. They're a serious investment but so worth it! Stay tuned for yoga routines that are also super helpful.

2. Gratitude journal

Science has shown that the simple practice of noting what you're grateful for can improve mood and outcomes. Do so daily with a [formal gratitude journal](#), [other wellness log](#) (my personal favorite), or a [5-Year notebook](#) that allows you to reflect on years' past.

3. Therapy Light - particularly if you live in the north!

I know this may seem like voodoo magic, but [Therapy Lights](#) really work. You may have heard that they're good for folks with SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder, aka the Winter Blues), but they're also good for anyone who misses the sun outside. All you need is one that is at least 10,000 Lux (the measure of brightness). Sit with it when you wake up for 10 - 15 minutes, 12 - 18 inches from your face. I particularly like [this one](#) because it has a built in timer!

4. Be outside when you can

Here in New England, it is SO cold in the winter. I struggle to motivate myself to be outside when it's cold. Be grateful if you live in an area that is warm year round (and write it down in your journal!). If you don't, invest in a good pair of [walking treads](#) and get out as often as you can, even if it's in 5-minute intervals. If you just can't do it, [walk inside](#) instead.

5. Recreate what you love

What do you enjoy during other times of the year? For me, it's definitely being by the ocean. Yes, I can still go to the ocean but it's freezing, remember? So instead, I think of all of things I love about the beach - the heat, the smell of tanning lotion, and the sound of the ocean. I sometimes sit on a [heating pad](#) or [heated blanket](#), burn a [coconut candle](#) or use [lotion](#), and listen to an [ocean](#) track. Don't afraid to get creative!

6. Healthy Sleep Hygiene

Prioritize sleep by creating a relaxing bedtime routine, avoiding screens before bed, and ensuring a dark, quiet, and cool sleep environment. Use books and calming music instead. Right now, I am loving this [book series](#). Aim for 7-9 hours of quality sleep each night.

7. Creative Outlet

What do you enjoy doing? Do you like making stuff with your Cricut (I just got the [Maker](#) and am IN LOVE) or stringing jewelry? Pull the stuff out and make something that you feel good about. Or do you need a little more instruction in your creativity? [Woobles](#) are super fun and beginner (or experienced crocheter) friendly. Still intimidated? Legos count! I'm dying for [this kit](#)....

Summary

Incorporating these mental health essentials into your daily life can significantly improve your overall well-being. Planning ahead and anticipating you may need more support is key. Remember to be patient with yourself and listen to your body. This is not just about caring for yourself; it's about giving you the best opportunity to be happy!