

BLUE MONDAY TRANSCRIPT

Date: Monday 30 November

Speaker: Prof. Andrew Lane

- 18:55 Lumie: Welcome to Blue Monday, Lumie's weekly online SAD clinic. Starting in five minutes, Andrew Lane, a Professor of Sport Psychology at the University of Wolverhampton and a chartered Psychologist, will be available to answer your questions on mood and exercise. Speakers over the coming weeks include a representative from the MET Office and scientific experts working in the field. Thank you for taking the time to log-in, we hope this evening's session is of interest.
- 18:56 Ian Price: How can exercise influence your mood and can it specifically help SAD sufferers?
- 18:57 Andrew Lane: A great deal of evidence shows that exercise is associated with enhanced emotions; people go into an exercise class in an unpleasant mood and report feeling more uplifted at the end. The type of exercise varies hugely; personal preference plays an important factor, and so people who like running, for instance, feel uplifted by exercise. People who like taking part in an exercise class report a feeling score. Running tends to take place outdoors and fitness classes indoors. People who exercise indoors and get the mood lifting effects of exercise can get this throughout the year.
- 18:59 Peter Moore: Would you say that for many athletes the level of training they undertake is reduced during winter due both to the practicalities of there being fewer daylight hours and also less of the "get up and go" feeling that one gets in spring and summer?
- 19:03 Andrew Lane: In an answer yes; people tend to take less exercise in the winter. Is this related to varying in motivation (or get up and go)? Yes, but I don't think it has to be. If you anticipate that during the winter you will need to find an indoor alternative, then you can plan to maintain regular exercise. If you get into the habit of exercising indoors throughout the UK (to a lesser degree in the summer and more often in the winter) then the habit requires modification. I think it helps to have an opportunistic attitude to good weather; if it is sunny, then take the opportunity to get into it. Unfortunately, in the UK, we have to have this attitude in the summer also.
- 19:08 Joanne Robbins: What is the best time of the day to exercise?
- 19:11 Andrew Lane: What the best time for exercise? My initial response is to suggest "whenever possible", in that with ever increasingly busy life and so finding time to exercise can be very difficult. Being able to exercise at any time in the day and enjoy is

another way of looking at it. Some people like exercising in the morning, others in the evening. I have worked with people who do not like exercising in the morning, developing strategies for them to overcome their self-belief that they are not good in the morning. Once this self-perception has changed, then they start enjoying it.

- 19:14 Michelle: Do you think light therapy can also boost mood when combined with exercise?
- 19:21 Andrew Lane: When you combine two treatments for a condition it is difficult to say whether there will be an additive effect. If exercise improves mood, then it is difficult to estimate whether light therapy on top of this continues to help. The benefits of exercise are that it improves emotions, and enhances physical well-being, and therefore including along side light therapy should be beneficial.
- 19:22 Stuart : I would like to run in the morning but I suffer from SAD and can't motivate myself to get up early. I feel it's a vicious circle. During the day I have to work. What advice can you give me?
- 19:29 Andrew Lane: As autumn leads to winter and the morning get darker, wanting to go for a run outside presents a progressively more difficult task. Daylight prompts us to wake up during the summer and not so during the winter; in short, yes its more difficult. You are setting a more difficult goal in the winter. And so what are your options; accept that the morning run is a summer and spring activity and look to run on "nice days" during the autumn and winter. Its important not to "beat ourselves up" over the goals we set and in that way so don't have to enter the vicious circle.
- 19:29 Louise Butler: As a sad sufferer, it's not always possible to feel 'motivated' to take part in exercise, what would you suggest I do? Should I try and plan my week out and stick to some sort of planned schedule or just see how i feel each day? Also, do you think this will help the way I feel?
- 19:40 Andrew Lane: The first issue to do here is to unpack what the first goal here is. I argue that for many, the first thing to do is establish the habit. And to do that, the goal must not seem daunting. If this means, getting out for 5-10 mins, then this is a success. If this means, walking for that time, then that can be a success also. I can imagine many people have bad habits they would like to stop; once a habit is formed, the decision to do it becomes easier. I am not keen on fixed schedules as they do not account for unexpected matters that mean they have to change. In the UK, the best plans for training can be ruined by the weather. I would plan what time I have available at the start of each week and see when I would like to exercise. I would also look to be creative and take advantages of days when the weather is nice (I would look to do all year round).

- 19:40 Alex: Hello, how can we motivate ourselves to take on exercising when the days are so short and the cold is already upon us? It may sound like an obvious question but it is really hard to get out there?
- 19:45 Andrew Lane: I can only agree that exercising in the outside in the UK during the winter is more difficult. Exercise can be done indoors and there are a number of factors that can help uplift mood. Exercise classes provided the benefit of being a part of a group and the shared experience that involves; the benefits of listening to motivating music, and the benefits of encouragement from the instructor.
- 19:45 Karen: I walk on average 5 miles a day with my dog, at about 4mph. Cross-country, through slippery mud, against the wind and uphill this feels like quite hard work, but is it an adequate form of aerobic exercise?
- 19:52 Andrew Lane: 5 miles walking is fantastic; you are in the habit of exercising although refer to it as walking the dog. Your goal is manageable and I expect you are opportunistic about when to take the dog out, albeit fitting it in around other demands. Covering 35 miles per week around varied terrain is excellent exercise.
- 19:52 Paul Davies: I have a very demanding job and usually I feel it best to start early in the day. When I finish in the evening I just want to relax and don't really feel the urge to exercise. Do you have any advice so that I can better plan an ongoing routine?
- 20:04 Andrew Lane: You have the desire to exercise, but do not find the time. This is a common issue with people working progressively long hours. What's the answer; it's not straightforward. Firstly, I suggest some reflection and analysis of what time you do already; what time do I have no choice over what I do, and what time to I have choice over what I do. Exploring the later is key as this is what you can work with. If there is time in the day, and if there is a gym near by, or a place to run or walk, then I would look to do that in the lunch time. If you found a type of exercise that is enjoyable, that would be a start. Exercise could be built into group activity and be enjoyable also.
- 20:04 Joe Wickes: I play football and sometimes play five a side on my lunch break at work, I also play on a Saturday day - do you know why i feel more energised during the weekend game as opposed to the one I play mid-week lunch?
- 20:07 Andrew Lane: Yes, the likely reason for this is that the strains of your job have had a tiring effect. You are probably taking emotional baggage from work into the game. At the week-ends, this is less likely. However, if you had an argument with your partner? Received a tax bill? Or some unexpected stressor shortly before playing, it is likely to

influence how you feel regardless of when the game is played.

- 20:08 Michael Dench: I'm not sure if you can answer this one, but when rehabilitating an injury, when is the best time to exercise?
- 20:15 Andrew Lane: I think that balancing how well you feel and how hard you work at the time of the exercise is crucial. It is important to be flexible in this regard and therefore attempting to exercise too hard when not feeling ready, or feeling over energetic can be damaging. This effect could occur at any time of the day. If you imagine how you wish to feel when exercising and then try to get yourself into that state, then you begin to identify how you get regulate your emotions to optimal level. With practice, getting yourself into the best psychological state should be able to be done at any time of the day.
- 20:15 Joanne Robbins: Thanks for your answer to my question. I saw a program a few months ago which said exercise in the morning was not so good for one as exercise later in the day. Generally I prefer to exercise when I get up, but I was just a bit concerned that it might be the wrong thing to do.
- 20:20 Andrew Lane: The issue here is what we interpret by idea that exercise was not so good. There can be huge psychological benefits from exercising in the morning. Yes we know that people's body clock suggests that they might be physically more able later in the day, although this varies hugely. I am not that the evidence for suggesting exercise can be better at any time of the day is that convincing.
- 20:20 Melanie Smith: This isn't really SAD related, but can you provide any welcome tips that can help me stay focused when I run? I have recently started running and am gradually building up my stamina. From never running I am now working towards taking part in a 10 mile race - how do I keep focused throughout my training though as I sometimes, especially just after I set off, I find it difficult to stay motivated - this is often when he weather is rubbish!
- 20:24 Lumie: Hi all. [Just to pre-warn you, we only have five minutes left of Professor Andrew Lane's time...](#)
- 20:25 Andrew Lane: When starting a running or any exercise programme, people need to remember that they are conditioning their minds and their body. Just as your body adapts to increasing demands, so can your perception that you can do it. Concentration in running can be focused on the task. For example, say to yourself "if my concentration wanes, then I'll focus on keeping a smooth rhythm" or "If I my concentration wanes, I count steps". Runners might wish to avoid thinking about running; listening to music when running is fantastic for this. Select music that you will anticipate enjoying listening to during the

parts of the run when your concentration wanes.

- 20:26 Ellie Wilson: In addition to general fitness, people often exercise to maintain or lose weight. Is there any evidence to suggest that combining light therapy with exercise will be more effective
- 20:29 Andrew Lane: The difficulty with extrapolating cause and effect from such treatments is huge. The possible placebo effect (it worked because I wanted it to) might explain some of the positive findings for the psychological benefits of both.
- 20:29 Alison: How do you suggest I might incorporate light therapy into a keep fit program? I normally try to exercise either in the gym or going running four days a week for 30 minutes to an hour, either morning or early evening. At this time of year I don't manage to keep this up and find that my weight increases as a result. Once I've begun missing sessions my motivation goes. Do you think light therapy might keep me going year round? If so are you able to recommend any particular sort?
- 20:33 Andrew Lane: I suggest being more flexible as to when you exercise; at present you appear to be de-motivating yourself. Exercising as part of a group in the gym and finding someone to share this experience might make it more enjoyable. If someone else commits to going with you to the gym or for a run, you will act as a support group. I realise I am offering this suggestion on insufficient knowledge.
- 20:34 Lumie: Blue Monday has now come to an end for another week - we would just like to say thank you for taking the time to log-on - we hope it was interest to you. We also want to say a huge, big thank you to Professor Andrew Lane for giving up his time to help answer everyone's questions. If you have any feedback on tonight's clinic, we'd love to hear from you - please email lindsay@lumie.com. Next week's Blue Monday expert is Doctor Rebecca Jelbert, a clinical Psychologist for Outlook Southwest – Doctor Jelbert will be taking questions about cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) for SAD – we look forward to receiving your questions on this.
- 20:34 Andrew Lane: That's it folks.... I hope it was useful. I enjoyed it. Some great questions.