

WATCH TV TO BEAT SAD

- Psychologist reveals how watching TV could help tackle Seasonal Affective Disorder -

- SpareRoom launches first ever SAD TV prescription: a curated selection of TV shows and films on Netflix, Amazon Prime and NOW TV that could help tackle SAD
- Psychologist Elaine Slater analysed thousands of shows and films across the three platforms and selected 20 based on specific criteria
- The Good Place, Sex Education, Friends, Grace and Frankie and The Marvellous Mrs Maisel are among the shows identified as having the right qualities to help
- 77% of flatsharers experience a lower mood during the winter months, with 48% believing they have SAD*
- 85% of those who watch as a household believe it has a positive effect on their mood**

During the winter months many people suffer from seasonal affective disorder (SAD)¹ and there are a number of established techniques to tackle it – including light therapy, exercise, supplements and a healthy balanced diet. Now, there's a new psychology recommended technique to add to the list of SAD treatments, and it's one most people won't mind trying: watching TV.

Leading flat and house share site SpareRoom commissioned psychologist Elaine Slater to research how watching television shows and films with others could have a positive impact on fighting SAD symptoms, such as anxiety, disrupted sleep, low mood, irritability or depression. It's believed to be the first time that a psychologist has looked specifically at the ways in which on-screen entertainment experienced in a social setting can combat SAD.

After establishing a methodology² to determine which TV series and films have the potential to alleviate SAD symptoms, the psychotherapist analysed content across Netflix, Amazon Prime and Now TV. She identified a list of 20 titles with the right qualities to help tackle SAD (in conjunction with traditional techniques). These included The Marvellous Mrs. Maisel, Grace & Frankie, Friends and Catastrophe. SpareRoom is now encouraging housemates that suffer from SAD to watch the shows and films from the list and let them know what benefits it had.

Among the detailed criteria³ used to determine which shows might help tackle SAD were:

- demonstrating the importance of relationships
- inspiring hope
- reminding us we shouldn't be afraid to be our authentic selves
- showing scenes of laughter and joy
- containing lessons about not being afraid to overcome challenges

The SAD TV List (in no particular order). *Further information on each programme and why it meets the criteria can be found in the notes to editors*⁴:

- Grace and Frankie (Netflix)
- The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel (Amazon Prime)
- The Blind Side (Netflix)
- Good Will Hunting (Netflix)
- About A Boy (Netflix)
- Friends (Netflix)
- Dumplin (Netflix)
- Legally Blonde (Netflix)
- Love and Other Drugs (Amazon Prime)
- Catastrophe (Amazon Prime)
- The Good Place (Netflix)
- Queer Eye (Netflix)
- Sex Education (Netflix)
- Modern Family (Amazon Prime)
- Pitch Perfect (Netflix)
- Avatar (Now TV)
- The Greatest Showman (Now TV)
- School of Rock (Now TV)
- Sex and the City (Now TV)
- The Big Bang Theory (Netflix)

UKCP registered therapist Elaine Slater commented: “Having spent time reviewing many TV shows and movies, it’s clear they are a mirror for everyday life. In the context of Seasonal Affective Disorder symptoms, television offers a window on a broad spectrum of similar issues. The ways characters not only engage and grapple with these issues, but in many cases demonstrate great resilience in overcoming them, can help us in our own lives.

The list of 20 shows is by no means comprehensive. There will be more titles that fit the criteria and the potential for any one show or film to have a positive effect on an individual will depend on personal taste. But watching these kinds of television programmes and films in the company of others, together with using other tried-and-tested techniques, may help contribute towards alleviating some of the most common symptoms of the SAD.”

As well as watching the TV and films together, there are also a number of other techniques housemates can use to turn their whole living room into a SAD-busting environment:

- Use any opportunity to be exposed to natural light when possible – while watching SAD-busting shows, keep the curtains open until it gets dark or have a SAD light box next to you by the sofa
- Manage SAD food cravings with a balanced, nutrient-dense diet – try to avoid binge eating whilst bingeing on your favourite shows
- Exercise is important as physical activity increases energy levels and lifts mood so make sure you’re moving in between episodes
- Avoid and manage stress where possible. Try to create more spare time to mindfully rest, relax and unwind in the company of your housemates

- Most importantly, spending time with others can often be the best medicine for starting to feel yourself again, so plan time in your busy schedule to spend time with friends, family and housemates

Matt Hutchinson, Communications Director for SpareRoom concluded: “We know the winter months are a challenge for lots of people. But we also know that spending time with others is one of the most effective ways to lift your spirits. So watching uplifting films and TV shows with your housemates makes total sense. It’s also a rare opportunity to feel good about something you’re most probably doing anyway.”

When you share your home, spending time together can make such a difference, turning housemates from people who simply share a space into a community of friends who genuinely enjoy one another’s company.”

- ENDS -

For more information or to speak with registered therapist Elaine Slater please contact spareroom@cowpr.com or call 020 7234 9150.

Notes to Editor:

1 – About Seasonal Affective Disorder

SAD is a complex winter related malady that recurs each year, most likely triggered by the lack of sunlight in winter, which affects levels of hormones melatonin and serotonin in the part of the brain (hypothalamus) controlling mood, sleep and appetite – our circadian rhythms.

2– Further explanation of methodology and rationale to determine list of TV shows and films (written by Elaine Slater)

“Having spent time reviewing many different TV shows and Movies it is evident how entertainment of this nature is a wonderfully accurate mirror for everyday life.

In the context of Seasonal Affective Disorder, where an individual may be suffering with symptoms such as; anxiety, disrupted sleep, low mood, irritability or depression, television offers a window on a broad spectrum of similar issues. The ways in which characters not only engage with and grapple with their issues, but in many cases overcome them, or demonstrate great resilience and ingenuity in the ways in which they cope chime with our own experiences.

Television as a mirror of everyday life teaches us that life as a human being in the 21st century is fraught with challenges and can be very difficult at times. In essence, demonstrating we are not alone when we feel low, miserable or that life is really difficult and doesn’t seem to be working out for us.

TV shows offer an opportunity to reflect on and think about life; the characters model various behaviours and feelings that can often resonate with our own experience. We observe their struggles with themselves and life, in a similar way to how we experience our own struggles and difficulties. As characters evolve they model a variety of behaviours that offer us direction, guidance, new ideas and a way forward towards facing and solving our own challenges.

When we feel low in mood or anxious it can seem as though the world is against us. At times, we experience a sense of overwhelm, isolation and loneliness – no light at the end of the tunnel. Often an on-going TV series provides solace and comfort. As plots and characters evolve we become invested in their outcomes and ultimately care about what happens. Our sense of familiarity with narratives and

characters offers a sense of belonging and relationship; we become emotionally involved and care about what happens to these characters.

At times, story lines and characters go so far as to help restore our faith in humanity and the fundamental goodness of people. They can touch our heart and help us reconnect with feelings of inspiration and love. Some narratives explore that even in our darkest hour there is still hope that we can search out what is meaningful to us, find our voice, stand up for ourselves and prevail.

Watching our favourite TV shows provides not only something to look forward to but also an opportunity to share in the anticipation, suspense or excitement with others. This offers a sense of bonding with others over a shared experience and feelings of belonging, participation and being connected to like-minded people. Helping us feel less isolated or alone with our troubles.

Stories and characters tap in to our emotional self. Often triggering feelings that are repressed or split off. Sometimes crying for a character or storyline or laughing along with the narrative helps us reconnect to our feelings and ourselves. Ultimately helping us feel present and emotionally engaged.”

3 – List of criteria used to determine the initial list of SAD titles:

1. The importance of relationships, community and belonging
2. Inspires hope and shows there's light at the end of the tunnel - dark times are part of life
3. Be your authentic self – even if you're struggling to fit in
4. Overcoming challenges and persistence
5. Includes taking responsibility, whether socially, ethically or morally
6. Messages of restoring faith in humanity from demonstrations of kindness, showing people can be good
7. Communicates that everyone has something unique and special to offer
8. Includes laughter and joy, elevating the viewers mood

4 - Further information on The SAD TV List and why they were selected (written by Elaine Slater):

Friends – 1,7,8

This diverse group of individuals demonstrate the value of relationships by coming together to form an urban family supporting and comforting one another through life's challenges.

Grace & Frankie – 1,2,3,4,8

This is a tale of opposites attracting and discovering a deep friendship. An important message here is never judge a book by its cover. The story inspires hope and possibility even in our darkest moments.

The Marvellous Mrs Maisel – 2,3,4,8

As the central character's perfect and idealised life dismantles she is challenged to reveal her true self. An inspiring message to live your truth as your authentic self. You are enough just as you are.

Big Bang Theory – 1,3,7,8

A clever and talented group of outsiders struggling to fit in with societal norms. Wonderfully inspiring when one has feelings of not belonging or isolation.

The Blind Side – 1,5,6

Often when we reach out to others with a helping hand our own lives improve too. Our actions remind us of the purpose and meaning in our own lives.

Good Will Hunting – 1,2,3,4,5,6,7

A moving demonstration of a relationship built on love and trust, transforming and healing both individuals. Forming relationships takes a leap of faith.

About a Boy – 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8

A tale of an individual who transforms his own life through acts of kindness towards a boy struggling to cope and searching for a safe-haven. Our relationships with others affect our relationship with ourselves.

Dumplin – 2,3,4,7,8

Living up to expectations of who we “should” be causes suffering and sadness when we inevitably fail to be perfect. Dumplin reminds us there’s no such thing as perfection as she grapples with her body image and what it means to be “beautiful” in today’s visual oriented society.

Legally Blonde – 3,4,7,8

Never judge a book by its cover. Despite a life of privilege, Elle Woods experiences, and overcomes, a lack of meaning because she isn’t seen for who she truly is.

Love & Other Drugs – 3,4,7

Be authentic, real and vulnerable. We don’t need to hide our flaws, imperfections or illness – we are good enough and deserving of love just as we are.

Catastrophe – 1,2,3,4,8

An acute observation of what intimacy, trust and loyalty mean in a relationship. We aren’t perfect and don’t always get it right. Human beings are flawed and it’s important to let go of the perception that we ‘should’ be perfect.

The Good Place – 1,3,5,6,7,8

An entertaining example of reflecting on our relationship with ourselves. A group of vastly different characters who are limited in their social groups because they are considered outsiders and misfits, join together to make themselves better people.

Queer Eye – 2,3,4,5,7,8

At the core is a big-hearted approach towards those who feel lost and low in confidence. It demonstrates a fundamental truth – we all live more productively when we feel seen, valued and deserving of spending time on ourselves.

Sex Education – 2,3,4,7,8

A forthright depiction of the messiness of life. It demonstrates our capacity for heartfelt empathy in moments of excruciating vulnerability.

Modern Family – 1,3,6,8

A celebration of diverse family life and overcoming the trials of modern living. The show challenges the stereotypes of traditional happy families, offering us an opportunity to normalise our own experiences.

Pitch Perfect – 1,3,4,5,7,8

Joining forces to achieve a single goal results in togetherness, solidarity, common ground and ultimately belonging.

School of Rock – 3,4,5,6,7,8

A heart centric lesson in taking responsibility and being willing to commit, leading to a discovery of self-worth & self-value.

Avatar – 1,5,6

Living a life with respect for all, rather than an isolated, 'it's all about me' life, gives us a greater connection with not only each other but with ourselves.

The Greatest Showman – 1,2,3,4,5,7,8

Offers an inspirational message of overcoming adversity through ingenuity, determination, and survival instincts for the greater good.

Sex and the City – 1,3,4,8

A wonderful celebration of the ups and downs of relationships and, above all, the value of friendship.

5. Survey

*A survey of 1,000+ SpareRoom users, January 2019

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About Elaine Slater

Elaine is a Therapist registered with The United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy and member of The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy.

Following a career as a model, Elaine completed a masters degree course in psychology and is also trained in coaching, meditation and mindfulness.

Elaine is in private practice with consulting rooms in Marylebone. She is a Therapist for The Priory Hospital, Viva Mayr Medical Clinic Harley Street and Bamford Haybarn Spas. Elaine is the UK Therapist for luxury concierge group Quintessentially.

As a Therapist with an integrative therapeutic approach to her clinical work, she treats a variety of wellbeing problems, mental health issues and psychiatric disorders. Elaine draws upon techniques of meditation, guided breathing and visualisation, mindfulness and interpersonal neurobiology.

In addition to her clinical practice, Elaine is often enlisted to consult for corporations, bringing psychological insight to an understanding of clients, products and brands. Elaine is an articulate and informative public speaker; she has been the chosen expert for a number of panel discussions, campaigns and press events.

About SpareRoom

SpareRoom is the UK's leading flat and house share site with over 8 million registered users. Founded in the UK in 2004, the company expanded into the US market in 2011 and has currently helped over three quarters of a million people find a room or roommate in the US.

SpareRoom holds weekly [SpeedFlatmating](#) events, helping people find their ideal flatmate in a relaxed, social setting, in London, Manchester and New York.