The Long-Evening Plan

A Sunshine on Tap Worksheet for Shorter Days and Darker Evenings

Somewhere in early November, it happens. You look up from the dishes or your desk, and it's already dark outside. It's barely past five.

For a lot of us, those long, dark evenings land in a particular way:

> *"Is it really only 6:30?"*
> *"I'll just lie on the couch for a minute."*
> *"There's no point going out now."*
> *"Where did the whole evening go?"*

This worksheet is a way to give those evenings some shape. Not a strict schedule or a self-improvement project, just a few small, realistic things that make the dark hours feel cozier, warmer and a bit more like yours. **The goal is evenings you look forward to, not evenings you get through.**

Let's start by noticing how the evenings feel right now.

> **A gentle note:** This worksheet is a space for reflection. It isn't therapy, and it doesn't diagnose or treat any condition. It's not a replacement for care from a doctor, counselor or other qualified professional. Take what's helpful, leave what isn't, and reach out to someone when you need it.

1. How the Dark Evenings Land for Me

Everyone feels the change a little differently. Some people barely notice it. Others feel it the minute the clocks change. There's no right reaction here, only yours.

When it gets dark early, I usually feel…

The time of evening that feels hardest:

Compared with summer evenings, mine feel…

☐ About the same ☐ A little flatter ☐ A lot flatter ☐ Actually cozier

Something I like about this time of year, even a small thing:

2. My Evening Right Now: A Quick Map

Before changing anything, it helps to see what an ordinary weeknight actually looks like. Think about a typical evening this week. Be honest. Nobody is grading this.

Time	What I'm usually doing	How it feels (1–5)
5:30	*Driving home in the dark, already tired*	*2*
8:00	*On the couch with my phone, half-watching a show*	*3*

The part of my evening that already works for me:

The part that tends to slip away without me noticing:

3. What I Miss About the Light

Long summer evenings come with a lot of small things we don't think about until they're gone. Naming what you miss can point you toward what to bring back, in a different form.

- ☐ Being outside after work
- ☐ Walking after dinner
- ☐ Feeling like there's "more day" left
- ☐ Seeing neighbors around
- ☐ Natural light in my kitchen
- ☐ Spontaneous plans
- ☐ Sitting on the porch or balcony
- ☐ Doing errands without rushing
- ☐ The sky at sunset
- ☐ Feeling awake later
- ☐ Kids or pets playing outside
- ☐ Other: _____

The one I miss most:

What was it about that thing that I liked?

For example: "Walking after dinner meant I moved, got fresh air and talked to my partner."

Is there a piece of that I could keep, even in the dark or at a different time of day?

4. Cozy, Not Cooped Up

There's a difference between a warm, comfortable evening at home and an evening that feels like you're stuck inside waiting. Often it comes down to small details: what you're wearing, what you're holding, what you can see and hear.

Some comforts other people swear by. Borrow any that sound good:

- *A favorite mug and something warm in it*
- *Soft socks or a sweater that only comes out in winter*
- *A blanket that lives on the couch*
- *A playlist for cooking dinner*
- *A book that's easy to pick up and put down*
- *The smell of something baking or simmering*

Sense	What already feels cozy to me	Something I could add
Example	*My old flannel shirt*	*A heavier blanket for the couch*
Touch		
Sight		
Sound		
Smell		
Taste		

What makes an evening feel "cooped up" for me instead of cozy?

5. Light and Warmth I Can Add

You can't make the sun stay up later. But you can change what your evening looks and feels like once it's gone. These don't need to cost much, or anything at all.

Ideas to try (check any that appeal to you):

- ☐ A lamp instead of the overhead light
- ☐ A string of soft lights
- ☐ A candle at dinner (safely)
- ☐ A walk outside at lunchtime
- ☐ Sitting by a window in the morning
- ☐ Opening the curtains first thing
- ☐ A warm bath or shower in the evening
- ☐ Warm drinks after dinner
- ☐ Cooking something slow and cozy
- ☐ A brighter light for reading or hobbies
- ☐ Getting outside on weekend afternoons
- ☐ Other: _____

The two I'd like to try first:

Anything I'd need to get or set up:

For example: "Move the lamp from the bedroom to the living room."

A daytime moment I could spend outside, even for ten minutes:

6. Evenings With a Little Shape

Long evenings can feel endless when every one is the same. A loose rhythm gives them a beginning, a middle and an end, without turning them into a to-do list. Here are three simple shapes to try. Mix and match.

A soft landing	→	Something small that marks the switch from day to evening: changing clothes, making tea, a few minutes of quiet.
One good thing	→	One activity in the middle of the evening that you chose on purpose, not by default.
A gentle wind-down	→	A short, familiar way to close the evening: dimming lights, a few pages of a book, tomorrow's clothes laid out.

My soft landing could be…

My "one good thing" options:

My gentle wind-down could be…

The time I'd like my evening to start winding down:

7. Small Things to Look Forward To

A small bright spot on the calendar can make an ordinary weeknight feel different. Give each weeknight one thing to look forward to. Keep them small, cheap and easy to say yes to.

Some examples to get you started:

- *Taco Tuesday, or any dinner with a name*
- *A phone call with someone who makes you laugh*
- *A new episode of a show you're saving*
- *A puzzle, a craft or a slow recipe*
- *Library night: pick up something new to read*

Night	Something small to look forward to
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	

8. Staying Connected When Everyone Stays In

When it's dark and cold, it's easy for whole weeks to pass without seeing anyone outside work or home. Staying connected in winter often means making it a little easier, a little earlier or a little cozier.

Ways I could stay in touch this season:

- ☐ A regular weekly phone or video call
- ☐ A walk with a friend at lunchtime
- ☐ Inviting someone over for soup
- ☐ A standing game or movie night
- ☐ Texting someone a photo of my evening
- ☐ Joining a class, club or group
- ☐ Saying yes to one invitation a week
- ☐ Other: _____

People I'd like to see or talk to more this winter:

One small, easy plan I could make this week:

What usually stops me from reaching out in the evenings?

9. The Evening Pocket List

Some evenings you'll have a plan. Others, you'll find yourself on the couch at 7 p.m. thinking, "Now what?" This is the list for those nights.

Write down five things you could easily do on an ordinary dark evening that would leave you feeling a little better than scrolling. Keep them simple enough to start in under five minutes.

1

2

3

4

5

Where I'll keep this list so I actually see it:

10. A 7-Night Long-Evening Experiment

For one week, try one small change to your evenings, like a lamp instead of the overhead light, a soft landing after work, or one thing to look forward to. Each night, jot down what you tried and how the evening felt.

The change I'm trying this week:

	What I tried tonight	How did the evening feel?
Night 1		
Night 2		
Night 3		
Night 4		
Night 5		
Night 6		
Night 7		

At the End of the Week

Which evening felt best, and why?

What was easier than I expected? What was harder?

One thing I'd like to keep doing for the rest of the winter:

One Last Question

If you could design your favorite kind of winter evening, one you'd actually look forward to, what would it look, sound and feel like?

The days are shorter for a while. Your evenings can still be warm, a little lit up, and yours.

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