

FIGHT OFF THE Mid-Winter Blues

Winter. We are in the thick of it. The chilly weather and shorter days can take a toll on your physical and mental health. It's not uncommon to experience fatigue, sadness, difficulty concentrating, appetite changes and a disruption in your sleep schedule during the long, post-holiday, winter season.



HERE ARE SOME TIPS TO LIFT YOUR MOOD DURING THIS MID-WINTER STRETCH:



Get some natural morning light or simulated light. Since the lack of sunlight in the winter months, for some areas, can contribute to SAD*, it's important to soak it up. If possible, wake up with bright sunlight from a window, walk your kids to school, take your pet around the block or use a sunlight-simulating lamp. This type of lamp mimics natural light and has been shown to alter brain chemicals related to mood.



Talk to your doctor about your vitamin D levels.



Move your body in a way that works for you. Even a 15-minute walk is an incredible way to boost mood naturally and decrease feelings of depression. When you're in a funk, it is easy to say you will do something active once you're feeling more upbeat—but don't wait, stay consistently active for your body and mind.



Practice mindfulness and gratitude to help bring your head back into the present instead of letting darker thoughts spiral out of control.



Limiting social media use and screen time is key to maintaining a balanced mood.



Tackle chores you don't normally make time for in the warmer months. Using the time as an opportunity to check off items from your to-do list will make you feel accomplished and motivated.

SO WHY DO YOU FEEL SO... SAD?

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) affects up to 10 million individuals during the dark winter months.

When sadness interferes with your ability to function in your daily life, it could be more serious, like Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). If you think you may suffer from SAD, speak with a mental health professional.

Signs and symptoms SAD:

- Depression
- Sleep problems
- Lethargy
- Erratic eating patterns, marked by overeating and episodes of loss of appetite
- Craving for carbohydrate-rich foods and consequent weight gain
- Excessive sleeping and drowsiness
- Irritability
- Feeling extremely down and unsociable
- Loss of interest in activities you otherwise took pleasure in
- Difficulty concentrating
- Persistent feelings of guilt, hopelessness, and worthlessness
- Having thoughts of death or suicide

The main difference between the winter blues and SAD has to do with severity and level of functioning.

Sources: Galima AV, Vogel SR, Kowalski AW. Seasonal Affective Disorder: common questions and answers. Am Fam Physician.

Maggie Seaver, Seasonal Affective Disorder—Here Are Some Helpful Ways to Cope, According to Therapists, Real Simple.



Find moments to laugh throughout the day to release positive endorphins.



Talk to your friends and family—even a short conversation—to boost mood, get sad feelings off your chest, and initiate feel-good social interaction.



Shake up your routine. If your routine is wearing you down and leaving you grumpy, make some modifications. Try stretching or reading a few pages in the morning instead of the night or starting the day with a quick meditation exercise. See what energizes your day, and what isn't working.



Give yourself a break. Ease up on the expectations; remember, it is OK to say “no” to an invitation or leave a gathering early if that will take the pressure off. Winter is a particularly rough time for many people. Try not to beat yourself up about it.



Be mindful of your physical and mental well-being and seek out help if you need it!

If you find yourself feeling low and struggling to pull yourself out of it, we're here to help.

Turn to your Perspectives Assistance Program (EAP/ MAP/SAP) for confidential support and resources.

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