

Are the Winter Blues Getting You Down?



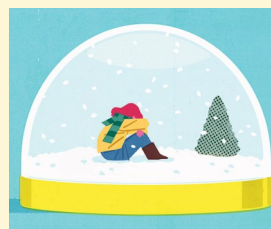
GOT THE WINTER BLUES? YOU ARE NOT ALONE...

As winter approaches, especially as we continue to navigate this COVID-19 environment, many of us may experience the “winter blues”. **The winter blues refers to a shift in mood during the colder, darker months.** You may experience a general sadness and lack of energy. You may find yourself feeling more lethargic and gloomy overall, for no specific reason. The good news is that the winter blues do not typically hinder your ability to enjoy life.

However, if these symptoms begin to permeate all aspects of your life, you may be experiencing something more serious, known as **Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)**. The Mayo Clinic defines Seasonal Affective Disorder as a type of depression that is related to changes in seasons — SAD begins and ends at about the same times every year. If you are like most people with SAD, your symptoms start in the fall and continue into the winter months, sapping your energy and making you feel moody. SAD can be more complicated and debilitating than the winter blues, but there is also treatment and ways to get help. The first step is to recognize the signs and symptoms.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF SAD MAY INCLUDE:

- ⇒ Feeling depressed most of the day, nearly every day
- ⇒ Struggling to focus and to perform at work or at home
- ⇒ Losing interest in activities you once enjoyed
- ⇒ Withdrawing and isolating from friends and family
- ⇒ Having low energy and feeling constant fatigue
- ⇒ Having problems with sleeping
- ⇒ Experiencing changes in your appetite or weight
- ⇒ Feeling sluggish or agitated
- ⇒ Having difficulty concentrating
- ⇒ Feeling hopeless, worthless or guilty
- ⇒ Having thoughts of death or suicide



MYTHS VS. FACTS:

Myth: People with SAD can just snap out of it.

Fact: SAD is not caused by a negative attitude; it is caused by specific abnormal physical changes in the brain and body.

Myth: Seasonal Affective Disorder only occurs during winter.

Fact: Although rare, SAD may occur in spring or summer.

Myth: Seasonal Affective Disorder is untreatable.

Fact: SAD is treatable, and subsequent episodes of seasonal depression can be prevented.

Resource: <https://www.therecoveryvillage.com/mental-health/seasonal-affective-disorder/related/sad-myths/>

TIPS AND TRICKS TO COMBAT WINTER BLUES:

- ◇ Get as much natural sunlight as possible – it’s free! Sunlight, even in the small doses can help boost serotonin levels and improve your mood. You can also talk to your doctor about increasing your Vitamin D.
- ◇ Exercise regularly—it can be as effective as medication. Aim for 30 to 60 minutes of activity on most days.
- ◇ Reach out to your support network— let them help.
- ◇ Eat the right diet. Avoid sweets and carbohydrates & eat fresh fruit and vegetables. This will help you keep your energy up and minimize mood swings.
- ◇ Seek counseling if symptoms are worsening.
- ◇ Contact PHOP for support: 1-866-578-7467

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/depression/seasonal-affective-disorder-sad.htm>



The Holiday Season is here! This is supposed to be a time of togetherness and joy. It can also be a time of stress. The biggest key in **Managing Holiday Stress** is to manage ourselves. When we manage our stress successfully (good stress) we become more **Resilient**. Stress can sometimes get the best of us and we may find ourselves chronically distressed and upset (bad stress).

The articles below cover topics that we can use to equip ourselves with the **tools and skills** to make sure our Holiday Season is filled with good stress and joy. If you are like many people, you might sometimes find it challenging to **navigate through the Holiday Season**. This is especially true this year as we have the addition of dealing with the pandemic.

You will find helpful **Tips** on managing expectations, dealing with too much or too little togetherness, difficult family members, dealing with loss, financial concerns, alcohol misuse, children, and inspiration through the articles below. There are also some **DIY Worksheets** and **Resources** listed to make sure you don't suffer in silence. **Help is available** and that includes **PHOP!**

Managing Holiday Stress Tip Articles

The American Psychological Association Holiday Stress Resource Center

<https://www.apa.org/topics/holiday-stress> This site includes multiple articles including Managing Difficult Family Conversations, Dealing with the Pressure of Gift Giving, Dealing with Financial Stress, and Managing Expectations. There are additional articles including Tips for Parents on Managing Holiday Stress.

Coping with the Holidays Survival Guide from PsychCentral

<https://psychcentral.com/holidays/> (PsychCentral/John M. Grohol, Psy.D et al. Last updated: 1 Jul 2020) Topics covered in this article include: Coping with Stress, Traditions, Finding Meaning & Gratitude, Loneliness & Being Alone for the Holidays, Relationships, Depression, SAD & Drinking, Children & Family, and Gifts, Cards and Presents.

The Holidays during COVID 19 Articles

Edward-Elmhurst Health

<https://www.eehealth.org/blog/2020/11/holiday-stress-coronavirus/> Tips to soothe your anxiety over the holidays and during the pandemic. Included are additional articles on de-escalating conflict and managing your teen's anxiety during the pandemic.

Boston Children's Hospital

<https://discoveries.childrenshospital.org/holidays-during-covid-19/> During this Challenging Holiday Pandemic Season here are some tips to prepare you and your family for a meaningful happy time!

DIY-Self Help Worksheets

Create your own Holiday Happy Healthy Plan

<https://d2zhgeghghqjuwb.cloudfront.net/accounts/1450/original/1447865239752-cjxp8t0rzzc-37e0849508ae51d2ed1a0aa6f256aabd.pdf?1447865241>

Coping with Holiday Stress Worksheet

<https://www.cigna.com/assets/docs/newsroom/834350-holiday-wellness-form2.pdf>

Holiday Budgeting Guide Worksheet

<https://www.consumercredit.com/debt-resources-tools/budgeting/budgeting-information/holiday-budgeting/>

Self Care Worksheet

<https://www.therapistaid.com/worksheets/self-care-assessment.pdf>

If you need someone to speak with or need help

Veterans Crisis Line <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/> 1-800-273-8255 Press 1 for Veteran Services TEXT with a Veterans Crisis Line responder – Send a text message to 838255

Vet4warriors <https://www.vets4warriors.com/> 1.855.838.8255 Peer counselors to speak with 24/7

Military Onesource <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/> Free Counseling 1-800-342-9647

Get Connected to a local PHOP Team Member
1-866-578-7467

Check us out on Facebook @BUMEDPHOP!

