



## NAVIGATING THE WINTER

# blues

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It's that time of year again when our days become shorter and darker. Starting in the fall, some people may experience significant mood and behavior changes adversely affecting their daily lives. Some of the changes include loss of interest in typical activities, increased appetite, low motivation, fatigue, feeling sad most of the day, etc. According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH, n.d.), these symptoms are related to a condition known as Seasonal Affective Disorder or SAD, a type of depression that can start in fall and end in spring. SAD may often be found more commonly in women and tends to affect individuals in the northern hemisphere.

So, how does a person treat SAD? If this is a condition that affects you or someone you love, it is important to seek one or a combination of the following treatments:

- Light Therapy- NIMH (n.d.) suggests using a lightbox every day for about 30 to 45 minutes right away in the morning.

- Psychotherapy- Different types of “talk therapy” can be useful in learning how to cope with daily challenges involved with SAD. If you like to be part of a group, there may be groups you can attend in your community. To make an appointment with a professional or ask about local groups, call The Village EAP at 800-627-8220. The National Suicide Hotline is also available 24/7 by calling or texting 988.
- Medications- Like other depressive disorders, SAD can be treated with antidepressants such as SSRIs. These medications can help lift your mood if you feel that counseling or therapy is not enough. Much research has shown that therapy and medication can have a much better effect than one alone. However, each person is different and should consult with their medical doctor and mental health professional when deciding on an appropriate path.
- Vitamin D- The nutritional supplement Vitamin D may help improve symptoms. However, research is mixed as to whether Vitamin D is as effective as other treatments. Nonetheless, always consult with your medical provider before adding, decreasing, or combining treatments (NIMH, n.d.).

SAD is a depressive disorder that can cause everyday struggles for many people at different times of the year. If you have noticed a pattern in yourself each fall and winter, there may be ways that you can help reduce or prevent SAD symptoms.

*National Institute of Mental Health (n.d.). Seasonal Affective Disorder.*