

FEELING SAD AND DOWN IN FALL



IN THIS EDITION

Summer is making space for fall, a time where a lot of us notice feelings of sadness, feeling down, lowered energy levels and lack of motivation. This is the topic of this month's newsletter.

1. Understanding SAD
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Winter Blues: Stats and Symptoms

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a common disorder in the Northern countries, especially when the days are getting shorter and colder. SAD affects approximately 2% to 3% of the Canadian population, with an increase up to 10% for the more Northern Territories.

The main symptoms include:

- Irritability;
- Tiredness or low energy;
- Oversleeping;
- Craving foods high in carbs and sugars;
- Weight gain;
- Depressive feelings.



THE SCIENCE

Behind

S.A.D

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a type of depression that occurs at a specific time of the year, usually during the fall and winter months when daylight hours are shorter. While the exact cause of SAD is not fully understood, research suggests that reduced sunlight exposure plays a significant role in triggering its symptoms.



The Role of Sunlight in Serotonin Production

Serotonin is a neurotransmitter that plays a crucial role in regulating mood, sleep, and appetite. Exposure to sunlight stimulates the production of serotonin in the brain. When sunlight hits the retina of the eye, it triggers a signal to the brain's pineal gland, which is responsible for regulating various bodily functions, including the release of serotonin.

During the darker months of the year, when there is reduced sunlight, the pineal gland produces less serotonin. This reduction in serotonin levels can lead to mood disturbances commonly associated with SAD, such as feelings of sadness, irritability, and a lack of interest in activities.



THE IMPACT OF SUNLIGHT ON MELATONIN

Melatonin is another neurotransmitter, primarily responsible for regulating sleep-wake cycles. Its production is inversely related to that of serotonin. When it's dark, the pineal gland produces more melatonin, making you feel sleepy and preparing your body for sleep.

In the winter months, decreased exposure to natural daylight, particularly in the mornings, can disrupt the body's internal clock. This disruption can lead to increased melatonin production during the day, contributing to feelings of fatigue and lethargy, two common symptoms of SAD.



STRATEGIES FOR

Winter Wellness

Mindfulness, a practice rooted in ancient meditation techniques, has gained recognition as a powerful coping strategy for managing Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). SAD often brings with it a cascade of emotional and physical symptoms, and mindfulness can help individuals develop greater awareness and resilience to combat seasonal depression.

The Power of Mindfulness for SAD

Mindfulness involves paying deliberate attention to the present moment without judgment. By using mindful attention for everyday activities, you can learn to acknowledge your thoughts and feelings related to SAD without becoming overwhelmed by them. This practice can lead to a greater sense of emotional balance and well-being.

Benefits of Starting a Mindfulness Practice

- Reduce the impact of negative thoughts and emotions.
- Enhance self-compassion and self-acceptance.
- Manage stress and anxiety associated with academic pressures.
- Improve sleep and feel more rested.
- Cultivate a greater sense of overall well-being.

Practical Mindfulness Exercises

1. **Guided Meditation:** Find a quiet space, focus on your breath and allow yourself to be fully present in the moment. Some great apps to use are Calm and DownDog Yoga app.
2. **Deep Breathing Exercises:** Inhale deeply for a count of four, hold for four, and exhale for four. Repeat this several times. This simple technique can calm the nervous system and reduce stress.
3. **Mindful Walking:** During your walks around campus, pay attention to each step, the sensation of your feet hitting the ground, and the sounds around you. Engaging your senses can help anchor you in the present moment.
4. **Mindful Eating:** Pay attention to the colors, textures, and flavors of your food. Eat slowly, savoring each bite. This can help you develop a healthier relationship with food and reduce emotional eating, which can be a symptom of SAD.



MEET

Tricia

OUR STUDENT THERAPIST

What can Tricia help you with?

Anger management	Life Transitions
Anxiety	Peer Relationships
Coping Skills	Relationship Issues
Depression	Stress
First Responders	Substance Use
Grief	Self-esteem

How to reach Tricia

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Mental Health Support for MBA Students

What kind of therapy help is available to you?

First 3 sessions:

Fully covered by MBA DeGroot
No expense for student

Sessions 4-6:

When possible – A doctor's referral
First \$100 paid by student, reimbursed by student's insurance
MBA DeGroot covers remaining

Sessions 6+: either

Personal insurance (ie: through parents' insurance policy)
Or possibly extra funding by MBA DeGroot



LIGHT THERAPY

Does it really work?

Light therapy involves exposure to artificial light sources that mimic natural sunlight. But does it really work? Research and statistics suggest that light therapy can indeed be an effective strategy for managing SAD.



What is Light Therapy?

Light therapy primarily works by helping to regulate the body's internal clock, or circadian rhythm, which can become disrupted during the darker months of the year. This disruption can lead to symptoms like low energy, mood swings, and increased appetite—common features of SAD. By exposing oneself to a light box, light bar, or light panel, individuals can stimulate their brain's production of serotonin, a neurotransmitter linked to mood regulation, and regulate melatonin, a hormone that influences sleep patterns.

How do I get started with Light Therapy?

To make light therapy most effective, consistency is key. Establish a daily routine of light exposure, preferably in the morning, to align with the body's natural circadian rhythm. Opt for a light box with an intensity of 10,000 lux or more, positioned at eye level and about 16 to 24 inches from your face for about 20-30 minutes each day. Engage in other activities while using the light, like reading or working, to maximize its benefits.

Choosing a suitable light bar or light box is crucial for effective therapy. Seek devices that offer a broad spectrum of white light, avoiding those emitting ultraviolet (UV) rays. Additionally, ensure the lightbox is certified for treating SAD and meets safety standards.





GETTING STARTED WITH A

Winter Selfcare Routine

Winter is upon us, and as students, it's easy to get caught up in the whirlwind of assignments, exams, and chilly days. But here's a secret: the winter season offers a unique opportunity for self-care that can leave you feeling refreshed and ready to conquer anything that comes your way.

Warm Up Your Body and Soul

A winter self-care routine isn't complete without a touch of physical warmth.

Consider these ideas:

Morning Stretches: Begin your day with a few gentle stretches. This gets your blood flowing, loosens up stiff muscles, and provides a refreshing start.

Hydrate and Nourish: Sip on herbal teas, hot water with lemon, or cozy cocoa throughout the day. Warm drinks not only hydrate but also comfort your body and mind.

Cozy Layers: Embrace the season's fashion with layers of soft sweaters, scarves, and mittens. Feeling snug and stylish—what more could you ask for?

Creative Pursuits and Hobbies

Winter can be the perfect backdrop for exploring new creative hobbies or diving into existing ones:

Art and Craft: Whether it's painting, knitting, or writing, indulge your artistic side. The process can be incredibly therapeutic.

Learn Something New: Always wanted to play an instrument or cook gourmet meals? Winter's the season to start.

Book Nooks: Create a cozy reading corner in your living space. Lose yourself in a good book, and let your imagination run wild.