

The Winter “Blah’s” Amidst a Pandemic

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Most of us rounded out 2020 with high expectations that 2021 would begin, and immediately treat us kindly. Facts are this time of year many experience “winter blues”, or shall we say “blah’s”. Seasonal Affective Disorder, also known as SAD, is a type of depression related to changing of seasons. Winter months are especially difficult due to days getting shorter, darker and quieter. These common winter feelings, amplified by the Pandemic, can limit our ability to do the things we enjoy.

What does Seasonal Affective Disorder, SAD, look like? Dr. Sudhakar Madakasira, MD, DLFAPA, Diplomat of American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology and Chief Medical Director with Psycamore, LLC describes many of the common symptoms people tend to experience are loss of energy, change in concentration, change in sleep patterns and change in appetite. Decreased activity both socially and physically are a few ways to notice if you may be struggling with seasonal affective disorder.

Even amidst a Pandemic, there are ways we can combat these winter “blah’s”. Eating well-balanced meals are important. Some report weight gain due to their increased cravings of heavy carbohydrates. Stay away from the heavy carbohydrates and incorporate more whole wheats, brown rice, and fruits and vegetables. Sleep patterns are also commonly affected. Adults should receive 7-9 hours of sleep a night. Setting a healthy nightly routine to get the sleep you need is strongly encouraged. Vitamin D is also important. With the shorter day light hours, taking advantage of the sunlight is helpful. Exercising outdoors in cold weather can be somewhat challenging but rewarding exercise experience. Aside from the physical benefits, research shows that exercising outdoors can increase energy, decrease depression, lessen anxiety, and enhance mood. Safety is important so be sure to wear appropriate clothing, monitor your fluid intake, and find a tribe; there is safety in numbers. Staying connected to your family, friends, and engaging in work and social life- even if its virtual is also important in combatting these winter “blah’s”. Speaking with a healthcare professional about which treatment, or combination of treatments, is best for you is important should you find yourself having difficulty navigating through these times. Treatments are also available that can help many people with SAD, that may be used alone or in combination: Light therapy, Psychotherapy, Antidepressant medications, and Vitamin D.

If you are experiencing a loss of energy, sleeping too much, overeating or depressed, there are resources available for you. Psycamore has programs tailored for Adults, Adolescents, and Children. Visit us online at www.psycamore.com for more information, or give us a call 601-939-5993.

