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Solutions

Winter 2014-2015



Seasonal Affective Disorder

Do you feel like you have the Winter Blues? Norman Rosenthal and his associates at the National Institute of Mental Health in the United States originally coined the phrase SAD as a form of depression which follows a pattern. For Rosenthal, it was about trying to understand his own experience with depression. He thought that the lack of sunlight in the winter might be the cause of his own depressive feelings. In 1993, he published a book titled; "Winter Blues." It was to become an introduction to the subject of SAD though an awareness of this condition had existed for many years prior to his research. In fact, research continues to examine what the exact cause might be.

Who does it Affect?

Research seems to show that a small percentage of people experience mild symptoms of SAD while some people will have more moderate symptoms. The Canadian Mental Health Association estimates that 1-3% of Canadians have difficulty coping with life due to SAD symptoms. It can impact children, teens and adults. There is some research that states the risk of SAD starts to decline over the age of fifty.

Where is it More Prevalent?

Not surprisingly, there is evidence that SAD is more likely to occur in northern countries where days are shorter and darker for a period of time in the winter. Canadians can certainly identify with this and depending



Quarterly Solutions

Beginning with this issue (Winter 2014-2015), the *Solutions* newsletter will return to quarterly publication.

We thank you for participating in our trial of monthly publication. What we heard from many of you is that you want to access wellness information in different ways.

The next issue of *Solutions* will be delivered in March of 2015. If you subscribed to the monthly issues, you will continue to receive *Solutions* quarterly.

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on your work patterns, we may feel like we leave from work in the darkness or always wake up in the darkness.

SAD can begin in other months but the symptoms can be worse in the winter.

What to Look for ?

Whether SAD is described as a mood disorder, a recurrent depression or the result of a major depressive episode, the symptoms are closely connected.

SAD is treatable.

Depending on the severity or impact of the symptoms in one's daily life it is advisable to talk to your family physician and/ or see a therapist. Be careful of a self diagnosis, although overall the largest majority of people usually find strategies to get them through this time period.

Who does it Affect?

Children and Adolescents:

- Irritability
- Problems in school
- Difficulty getting up in the morning

In Adults:

- Negative thoughts e.g. I'm a failure
- Feelings of being overwhelmed
- Difficulty concentrating
- Isolation/withdrawal socially
- Cravings for unhealthy carbohydrates-anything with white sugar, white flour or white rice
- Feelings of guilt about lack of interest in others and daily activities
- Irritability
- Lack of energy

What to Do for Children:

- Be patient and help distract from irritability by suggesting activities or varying their routine
- Make sure they eat well and get lots of sleep
- Make a winter blues book where they can draw what they are feeling; (add a summer book so they can see the difference)
- Physical activity and exposure to sunlight is very important

What to Do for Adults:

- Talk to others-do not become isolated
- Change your routine-be more spontaneous
- Go for a walk at noon with a co-worker
- Take a class
- Have lunch with a friend
- Journal
- Eat healthy whole grain carbohydrates
- Spend some time in Nature
- Watch a funny movie
- Expose yourself to light whenever possible

**"You're not in for much fun
Unslumping yourself**

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Is not easily done"
Dr. Seuss

Source: Judy MacKechnie MTS, RMFT

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