



How to Beat the Winter Blues

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“What lies behind you and what lies in front of you, pales in comparison to what lies inside of you.” -Ralph Waldo Emerson

What is Seasonal Depression?

In a nutshell, seasonal depression (Seasonal Affective Disorder) is the same as major depression that is more prominent during the fall and winter months, when the days get shorter in many parts of the world. Once the season changes and our days get longer, the symptoms subside until next year. One theory as to what causes seasonal depression is that decreased sunlight in the winter months may affect the levels of melatonin and serotonin in our brains, which can in turn affect our mood and energy level.

What does it look like?

There is a wide range of symptoms for seasonal depression and most match other forms of depression. The symptoms include:

- Low energy levels
- Loss of interest of things that brought you enjoyment
- Feeling hopeless
- Sleeping less or too much
- Being very self-critical
- Thoughts of suicide
- Self-harming behaviors

In younger children, symptoms can look completely different than in older children due to developmental differences in their

brain. Furthermore, boys and girls can present differently as well. Boys generally show more outward behaviors such as becoming more violent or explosive, whereas girls may show an increase in internalizing behaviors such as high self-criticism and isolation. .

What are some tips to help?

One of the best things you can do is get ahead of the season's challenges by putting a few strategies in place now, whether or not you are dealing with seasonal depression. Here are a few strategies to try:

- **Stick to routines.** Having a consistent schedule for sleep, meals, work and family activities can provide stability and keep everyone's spirits up.
- **Prioritize healthy habits.** Ask kids for their own ideas for healthy activities that they'd be excited to do on a regular basis. Maybe take a walk in the woods with the dogs, an after school visit to the park, or find fun healthy recipes to cook for dinner together.
- **Set realistic expectations.** Get together as a family and talk about what would motivate everyone for

the upcoming months. Brainstorm ideas that are achievable and will work with everyone's schedule. Pick a couple things to do each week and stick to it. You want to feel successful at the end of the week so you are encouraged to do it the following week.

Seasonal Depression Resources:

[Seasonal Affective Disorder](#)

[National Institute of Mental Health](#)

[Ideas to cope with Seasonal Depression](#)

[Everyday Health](#)

[Chautauqua County Resources](#)

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