



## THIS MONTH

### Seasonal Blues: Feeling Depressed, but Only in Winter?

**The holiday season brings with it a myriad of emotions and social gatherings. These are typically tied to positive experiences and uplifting memories, but for some, the holiday season can bring up emotions that are difficult to deal with. During the holidays people may struggle with the pain of loss and grief, or less**

Even when some people have all positive holiday experiences filled with joyous activities and gatherings, it is possible to still feel sad or depressed when the whirlwind is over and the new year begins.

This phenomenon is called "Seasonal Affective Disorder" (SAD). If this cycle of sad emotions during the holidays sounds all too familiar to you, you might have this diagnosable disorder. You might even know a family member that has it. Thankfully, there are ways in which to address it.

Seasonal Affective Disorder can be caused by a disruption in melatonin and serotonin. Normally, we produce melatonin during the night time when it gets dark to help us sleep. When there is less sunlight and more darkness during the long nights of winter, your body may produce too much melatonin. Serotonin, a chemical and neurotransmitter that regulates feelings of happiness, is also diminished by lack of sunlight. The combination of these two imbalances can cause depression. Here are some ways to combat "SAD":

**Be proactive.** Visit your physician proactively, especially if you know this happens to you every year. Tell him/her about your symptoms. An anti-depressant medication may be suggested as a remedy for that time period and may even need to be taken before any symptoms are evident.

#### "What is "SAD"?"

The Mayo Clinic describes "SAD" as "a type of depression that's related to changes in seasons – SAD begins and ends at about the same time every year. If you're like most people with SAD, your symptoms start in the fall and continue into winter months, zapping your energy and making you feel moody."



#### Signs of "SAD"

- Feeling depressed most of the day, nearly every day
- Losing interest in activities you once enjoyed
- Low energy and tiredness
- Having problems sleeping
- Appetite changes like craving carbs, feeling sluggish, or significant weight gain
- Difficulty concentrating
- Feeling hopeless, worthless or guilty
- Having frequent thoughts of death or suicide

**Purchase a therapy light.** You can find a therapy light on Amazon for around \$50. Use this to expose yourself to light for several hours each day. The light mimics the sun's effects, produces serotonin, and regulates melatonin which helps combat seasonal depression.

**Stay active.** Take a workout class, go for a run or walk outside, or watch a DVD/ television program that has structured exercise. Movement helps combat depression of all sorts!

**Stay engaged.** Encourage yourself to go out and enjoy a light spirited movie or concert even if you don't feel like going out. Structure it into your week by having standing lunch plans or eating dinner with your family each night.

**Eat well.** Sugar and refined carbohydrates can contribute to feeling blue. Try to avoid processed sugar and move towards fruits, veggies, and proteins. Keep some hummus and cut up veggies ready for snacking. Ask your physician if adding fish oil and Vitamin D to your diet might help.

If you make all the above changes and you are still feeling down, it might be time to call a professional counselor. At Eldercare Services several of our Professional Care Managers who are also licensed therapists. Give us a call and we will get you an appointment!

If you are feeling like life is not worth living, you should address these feelings immediately by calling 911 or an emergency suicide lifeline. Your feelings are real and there is help. Depression is very treatable. When you are in the middle of it, it can be hard to believe that there is a "life-preserver" out there for you or your family member, but there are certainly resources that can help.

Mental health can have a negative effect on physical health, so please stay well and seek professional advice if you are experiencing "SAD". It can be hard for many of us to ask for help but our lives are short and each of us deserves to live each day to the fullest. That means we need to seek answers for mental health challenges as well as medical challenges.

### Caring for an Aging Family Member

**2nd THURSDAY of EVERY MONTH**  
**6:00 PM – 7:30 PM**

Addressing the fears of Alzheimer's disease & other issues associated with aging.

No Fee and No Registration Required.



## About our Author



Linda Fodrini-Johnson, MA, MFT, CMC is a Licensed Family Therapist and Certified Care Manager. She has been practicing professional care management since

1984. Linda founded Eldercare Services, a fullservice care management and home care company in 1989. Eldercare Services has been providing Bay Area families with care management, home care services (caregiving), advocacy, counseling, support groups and education for 30 years. Linda is excited to be part of the Home Care Assistance family in order to expand the reach of Professional Geriatric Care Management with excellence in home care delivery.

## MONTHLY AFFIRMATION

**"Life is what I make of it. I have control over my own life."**

Call us at **925-937-2018** to learn more.

Eldercare Services is now a division of Home Care Assistance, giving you the combination of great expansive caregiving and professional guidance.

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