

My Mental Health Newsletter

December 2016

IN THIS ISSUE: WHAT IS SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER, WHAT CAUSES IT, AND HOW TO TREAT IT · HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

COMPASSIONATE CARE BACKED BY SCIENCE

MMH FOLLOWS EVIDENCE BASED PRACTICES, WHICH MEANS WE USE TREATMENTS AND INTERVENTIONS THAT HAVE BEEN THOROUGHLY TESTED AND RESEARCHED. THIS ENSURES THAT PROVIDE TREATMENTS THAT BEST HELP OUR CLIENTS REACH THEIR GOALS.

HOW WE HELP YOU

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS ARE TRAINED IN MEDICINE AND WORK UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF A PHYSICIAN. THEY PERFORM EVALUATIONS AND ASSESSMENTS, PRESCRIBE MEDICINE, ORDER PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTS AND REFERRALS AS NEEDED, AND ESTABLISH AND MANAGE TREATMENT PLANS.

LICENSED CLINICAL SOCIAL WORKERS ARE SOCIAL WORKERS WHO ARE TRAINED IN COUNSELING. THEY HELP INDIVIDUALS DEAL WITH A VARIETY OF MENTAL HEALTH AND DAILY LIVING PROBLEMS TO IMPROVE OVERALL FUNCTIONING AND WELL-BEING.

LICENSED CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGISTS ARE MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS TRAINED IN DIAGNOSING AND TREATING MENTAL, BEHAVIORAL, AND EMOTIONAL ILLNESSES. THEY USE PSYCHOLOGICAL METHODS AND RESEARCH IN THEIR THERAPY. THEY CAN ALSO PERFORM PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTS TO CLARIFY THEIR PATIENTS ISSUES AND IMPROVE TREATMENT.

Insurance

MMH PARTICIPATES WITH AETNA, CAREFIRST BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD, MAGELLAN, CIGNA, MEDICARE AND TRICARE.



A Message from Dr. Hanita Chhabra MD, Founder and Medical Director of MMH

"Happy Holidays from your friends at MMH! We hope this is a very healthy and happy holiday season for you and your loved ones. Sadly, for some the holidays, can bring with them more stress, worsening guilt, anxiety and depression. If you find yourself in need of any additional support, we are here to help. Thank you for your trust in our care in 2016. We wish you the best in 2017 and look forward to helping you achieve your goals!"

Have the Holiday Blues?

How to Spot Seasonal Affective Disorder

As the days get shorter and the nights get longer, do you find yourself feeling increasingly tired, sad, or lonely? If so, you may be experiencing Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).

SAD is considered a subtype of depression, and so has similar symptoms. Symptoms of SAD are listed on the back page. While there are both summer and winter versions of SAD, winter SAD is much more common.

Most people with SAD have their symptoms start in the fall, and continue during the winter months, sapping their energy and making them feel moody. Symptoms may start out

mild, and become more severe as the season progresses. If you think that you might have SAD, you should consult your doctor.

What Causes SAD?

The exact cause of SAD is unknown, but there are factors that play into it, mostly caused by the reduced amounts of sunlight in the fall and winter.

Reduced amount of sunlight can cause a drop in serotonin, a neurotransmitter that affects mood. Reduced sunlight also can disrupt the body's level of melatonin, which plays a role in regulating mood and sleep



For more information

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DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS OF SAD

- Feeling depressed most of the day, nearly every day.
- Feelings of hopelessness or worthlessness.
- Having low energy and/or problems with sleeping.
- Losing interest in activities you once enjoyed.
- Experiencing changes in your appetite or weight.
- Having difficulty concentrating.
- Having frequent thoughts of death or suicide.

SYMPTOMS SPECIFIC TO SAD

- Increased irritability.
- Problems getting along with other people.
- Hypersensitivity to rejection.
- Heavy, "leaden" feeling in the arms or legs.
- Oversleeping.
- Appetite changes, especially cravings for foods high in carbohydrates.

It is winter yet again. The beautiful colors of the autumn leaves have disappeared and have been replaced by barren tree limbs and icicles sharp and brittle. The harsh winds rattle the window frames and the cold air seems to sing a cruel song that frightens away birds to warmer climates. The daytime gives way to the moon, and darkness sets in way before supper. So, you see, while some perceive winter as a festive time when their worlds are blanketed by the purity of snow, others feel that they are being suffocated by a literally colorless existence.
- Jessica Blaszczak, for psychcentral.com

patterns. Shorter daylight hours and reduced melatonin can disrupt your circadian rhythm, your body's internal clock that regulates sleep. All of these factors lead to feelings of depression.

How to Deal with SAD

The first thing you should do if you think you have SAD is consult with your doctor. They can prescribe medication, and recommend other treatments, such as light therapy. In light therapy, also called phototherapy, you sit a few feet from a light therapy box, which emits light that mimics natural outdoor light. After daily use directed by your doctor, the lightbox can increase the melatonin and serotonin, and lessen depressive symptoms.

There are also lifestyle changes that can help alleviate the symptoms of SAD. The easiest is to expose yourself to light during the day: sit near a window, open the curtains, trim any tree branches that are blocking the light.

Alternatively, spend more time outside. Even on cloudy and overcast days, the outdoor light will help. This is especially effective if you can spend some time outside within two hours of waking up in the morning.

Another change that will help with light exposure, as well as improve the regularity of sleep, is to make a daily routine, and stick to it. Keeping a regular schedule will also expose you to light at consistent times, as well as maintaining a regular schedule of when you wake up, have meals, and go to bed, will help regulate your body.

There are more ways to make your sleep more regulated, including avoiding napping during the day, and avoiding stimulants like caffeine and nicotine before bedtime. You can also use an alarm clock that produces gradually light that gradually increases in intensity to wake you up, instead of one that produces a loud noise or music.

Regular exercise and other physical activity will relieve stress and anxiety, which contribute to SAD symptoms. This will also help prevent weight gain associated with SAD.

Most important, stick to the treatment plan that you and your doctor set up. Continue with the activities that you enjoy during sunnier months. The change in seasons, and subsequent change in moods and energy, can make you feel ungrounded. Staying engaged with things that you usually enjoy will help you feel consistent, and more like your normal self.

Want to learn more?

"Seasonal Affective Disorder"

by *Mayo Clinic*

"10 Things You Didn't Know About Seasonal Affective Disorder"

by Jessica Blaszczak for psychcentral.com

"12 Ways to Ease Seasonal Depression"

by Beth Orenstein for everydayhealth.com

Happy Holidays

Have feedback?

You can message us through Facebook, or anonymously through our website, and we will take your suggestions or concerns into consideration.

Why we love MMH

"MMH has a very relaxing, welcoming environment. Best experience at a therapist's office I've ever had." – DB

In our next newsletter...

In the spirit of the new year, MMH will give you tips to help lose weight and stick to other New Year's resolutions. See you in 2017!

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