



Mosaic Counseling

Employee Assistance Program

MOSAIC MENTAL HEALTH TIPS

THE OFFICIAL EAP NEWSLETTER FROM MOSAIC COUNSELING

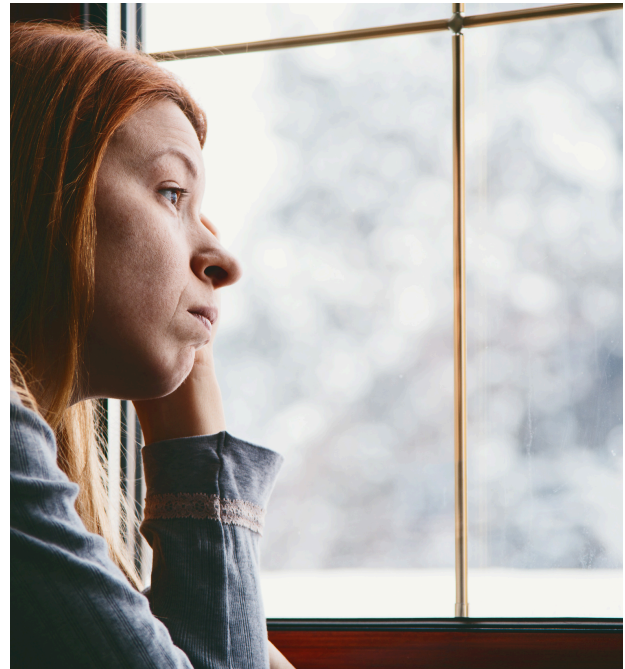
6 WAYS TO BEAT THE WINTER BLUES

BY BECCA STEWART
[HTTPS://TINYURL.COM/C2EEAECV](https://tinyurl.com/c2eeaecv)

The winter months mean fewer hours of sunlight and more time spent inside. Our brains need sunlight to regulate necessary mood-boosting chemicals like serotonin. Without enough sunlight, our internal clocks begin to shift. We get tired more easily and feel less motivated.

Here's the good news: research has helped us understand the winter blues and the more serious Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). While scientists don't know why some people are impacted more than others, they do know what contributes to the winter blues. By identifying the cause, we can overcome many of the symptoms with simple lifestyle changes. Of course, if you're experiencing severe depression, suicidal thoughts, or dramatic shifts in sleep or eating patterns, contact your doctor.

Even in the most severe cases, the following tips can help alleviate seasonal mood symptoms.



1. Get Outside

We already know that sunlight impacts our moods. Our brains rely on sunlight to regulate hormones, including serotonin (the "feel good" chemical) and melatonin (which helps regulate sleep). The cold weather keeps many of us inside during the winter, limiting our exposure to the sun. People who live in far northern regions have very few hours of sunlight each day, creating an even greater sunlight deficit.

If you can, get outside every day, especially if the sun is shining. Even if you only spend a few minutes outdoors, the sunlight will help your brain release those feel-good chemicals and brighten your mood.

You can also increase your sun exposure indoors. Open blinds and curtains in your house to let in natural sunlight. If possible, move your desk or workstation near a west- or south-facing window and take advantage of those rays.

2. Supplement Vitamin D

Our bodies require Vitamin D for many processes, including the regulation of our old friend, serotonin. The best source of Vitamin D? The sun. When we aren't getting outside or live in a sunless climate, Vitamin D deficiency can be a real problem.

Consider adding Vitamin D supplements into your diet during the wintertime. Talk to your doctor before introducing these supplements. Simple lab work can test your Vitamin D levels and determine just how much Vitamin D you need.

3. Increase Serotonin Levels

Sunlight helps regulate serotonin levels. But there's a way to increase serotonin production, even on the longest winter nights.

What's the secret? **Exercise.**

Physical activity is one of the best mood-boosting activities. So, if you're experiencing the winter blues, moving your body might be the only cure you need. You don't need to spend hours in the gym to feel results. Just 20 minutes of moderate exercise is enough to give your brain a boost.

4. Try Artificial Light Therapy

People who live in areas with particularly harsh winters (high altitude, far northern regions, or areas with lots of cloud cover) struggle more than most. In these cases, an artificial light lamp can help. These specialized therapy lights emit white fluorescent light, with a unique screen that blocks UV rays to prevent skin damage. People who use the light for 20-30 minutes a day report significant improvement in their moods.

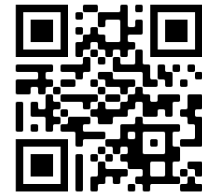
5. Talk, Laugh, & Be Merry

If you're feeling down, social gatherings might not sound appealing. But social interaction, face-to-face conversation, and laughter are scientifically proven to improve your mood. People with meaningful friendships tend to experience less stress, have fewer health problems, and live longer than people without. And laughter is proven to improve our overall sense of wellbeing.

Plus, connecting with others helps us feel less alone in our sadness. If you're experiencing the winter blues, there's a good chance your friends are, too. Talking about it can help.



**Scan the QR
code to
visit us on
the Web**



6. Get Help, If You Need It, By Calling Mosaic to Use Your EAP! 616-842-9160

The "winter blues" are mild for most people and can be remedied using the tips above. But for about 5% of people, the "winter blues" are something much more serious. Contact your doctor if you experience loss of interest or pleasure in doing things, little motivation, or changes in eating or sleeping habits. These symptoms could indicate Seasonal Affective Disorder or another medical problem. Your doctor can prescribe treatments designed to help you overcome the winter blues. There's no shame in asking for help when you need it.

Winter blues are a common problem when the weather turns cold. By staying active, seeking the sun, and speaking up when you need help, you can get your sunny disposition back in no time.