

# MENTAL HEALTH MOMENT

# BEATING THE WINTER BLUES

## WHAT ARE THE WINTER BLUES?

While some people welcome the winter months, many others find themselves having difficulty waking in the morning, experiencing fatigue & feeling a sense of depression during this time of year. This year amid the pandemic, these experiences are likely to be magnified by limitations on social gatherings & distancing.

**Here are tips to help you beat back the winter blues!**

## LIGHT MATTERS

Light has a major impact. Lack of light can throw off your circadian rhythm. This can cause your body to produce too much of the sleep hormone melatonin and release less serotonin. The winter blues can begin in early October and often end in April. Symptoms may not end until early May.

**Tip: Many people use light boxes to help. Recommended to be used in the morning, light boxes can be an effective way to start your day. Speak to a therapist or your doctor regarding how to effectively use a light box & receive recommendations for your treatment.**

## KNOW THE SEASONAL PATTERN

The most common period for onset of the winter blues and/or season depression is late October through November. January and February are usually the worst months with symptoms beginning to subside by late spring. Be aware that physical symptoms come first with higher levels of fatigue, sleep disturbance and a tendency to eat carbohydrates & comfort food. Shifts in mood follow which can decrease motivation, increase depression and other negative symptoms.

**Tip: It is not a case of IF but WHEN. Watch your sleep patterns beginning in October. Maintain a regular sleep pattern. Recognize the change in light is coming and will impact your mood. Make sure you are purchasing fruits and vegetables instead of snack foods. Talk to a trusted family member or friend about patterns in the past. Start prevention early.**

## GET ACTIVE & GET HELP

For many the winter blues are a regular occurrence. What will you do differently this winter season to respond effectively? Knowing & recognition can help us prepared a plan to get to spring!

**Tip: Produce endorphins. We are not helpless in the winter months. Get 30 minutes of exercise each day. Connect with a friend that struggles too & brainstorm ideas. Utilize your EAP...The winter months are a great time to see a professional therapist to help guide you through the season. Private & Confidential counseling is available.**

Source: Harvard Medical School



Seasonal depression affects 5% of Americans each year

4 out of 5 people who have seasonal depression are women

The main age of onset begins around ages 18-30 but can occur sooner

Further from the equator you live, higher the risk

Seasonal depression has a predictable pattern of occurrence and preventative measures should begin in the fall

(Source: Mental Health America)

Telephone counseling is now available through your Employee Assistance Plan  
To schedule private and confidential counseling sessions:

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**1 800 342 5653**



**www.bowencenter.org**