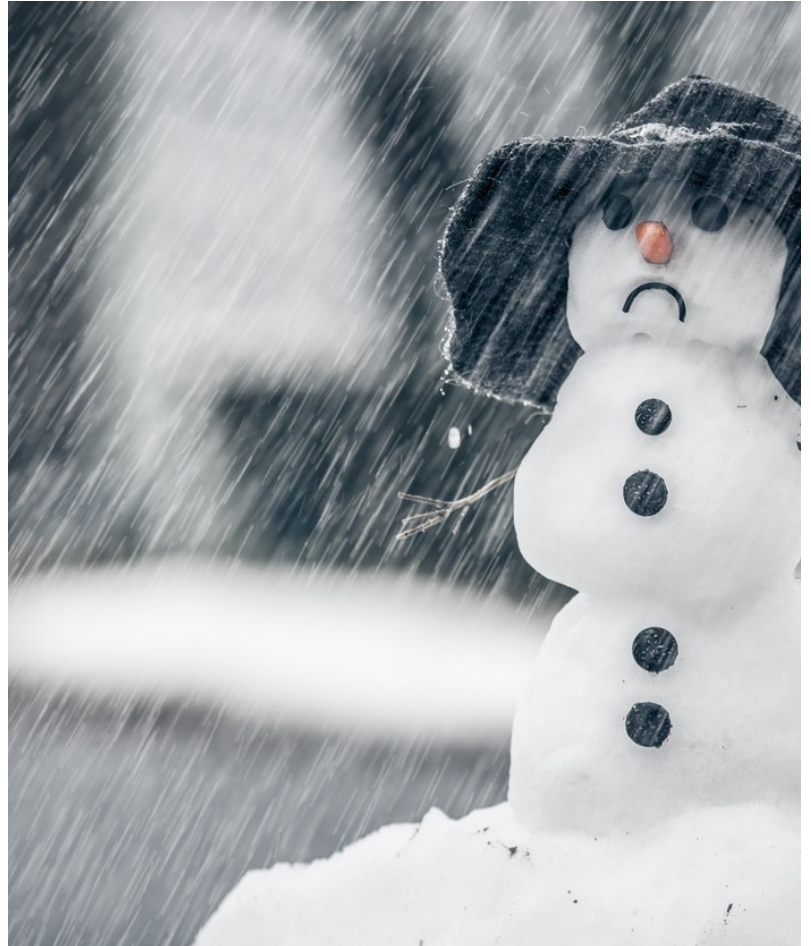


SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER (SAD)

• By Tyler Schamehorn, Psychologist at APC

Hello everyone, Tyler the Psychologist here again with another Psychology newsletter! I hope you have been enjoying these as much as I have enjoyed putting them together. In stride with the changing weather we have been experiencing, I thought it would be timely to talk about seasonal affective disorder (SAD) and some of the difficulties of being in Alberta during the winter.

Seasonal affective disorder is a term that is used quite frequently to describe the onset of mood dysregulation (often depression) that occurs during particular seasons (usually fall/winter) in the year. This term is not actually present in the DSM-V, the diagnostic manual for psychiatric disorders, but depressive disorders can be specified with seasonal patterns. This can be further identified by whether a person experiences mood changes due solely to the change in season or if there are other situational factors that may cause this to happen. For example, the transition into fall or winter can often be accompanied by the beginning of school, or work winding down if you are unable to do work in the winter. Other risk factors for a seasonal onset of depression are being of a younger age, and of a higher latitude, such as where we are here in Alberta (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).



What are ways we can deal with this? An intervention called light therapy has been used for treating seasonal depression for several years with it gaining much praise for how it can improve symptoms. This involves intentional exposure to a light via a light box that you would place close to you. There is evidence that this is an effective treatment for rapid symptom relief, but this shouldn't be considered a magic bullet treatment for all. It can be used to reduce symptoms temporarily but does not have evidence to support that it puts it into remission (Nussbaumer-Streit et al., 2019). Having psychotherapy for mood dysregulation can be effective (I'm biased, I know), particularly utilizing CBT techniques such as cognitive restructuring (Norton et al., 2022). Another way to play on this concept is by scheduling positive activities for yourself during the winter to build a positive association with the season (Rohan et al., 2023). This could be doing things like skiing or skating, getting hot chocolate, or any other enjoyable thing that comes out of winter. Bottom line is that you have to find a way to own winter and make it yours, not the other way around. If it becomes something you can start to embrace instead of avoid, then it will not have the same negative effects on your mood.

Of course, these things can be easier said than done, and not all these suggestions may be helpful for you. I have attached a link below to a blog that has some additional recommendations when it comes to self-care regarding this kind of disorder.

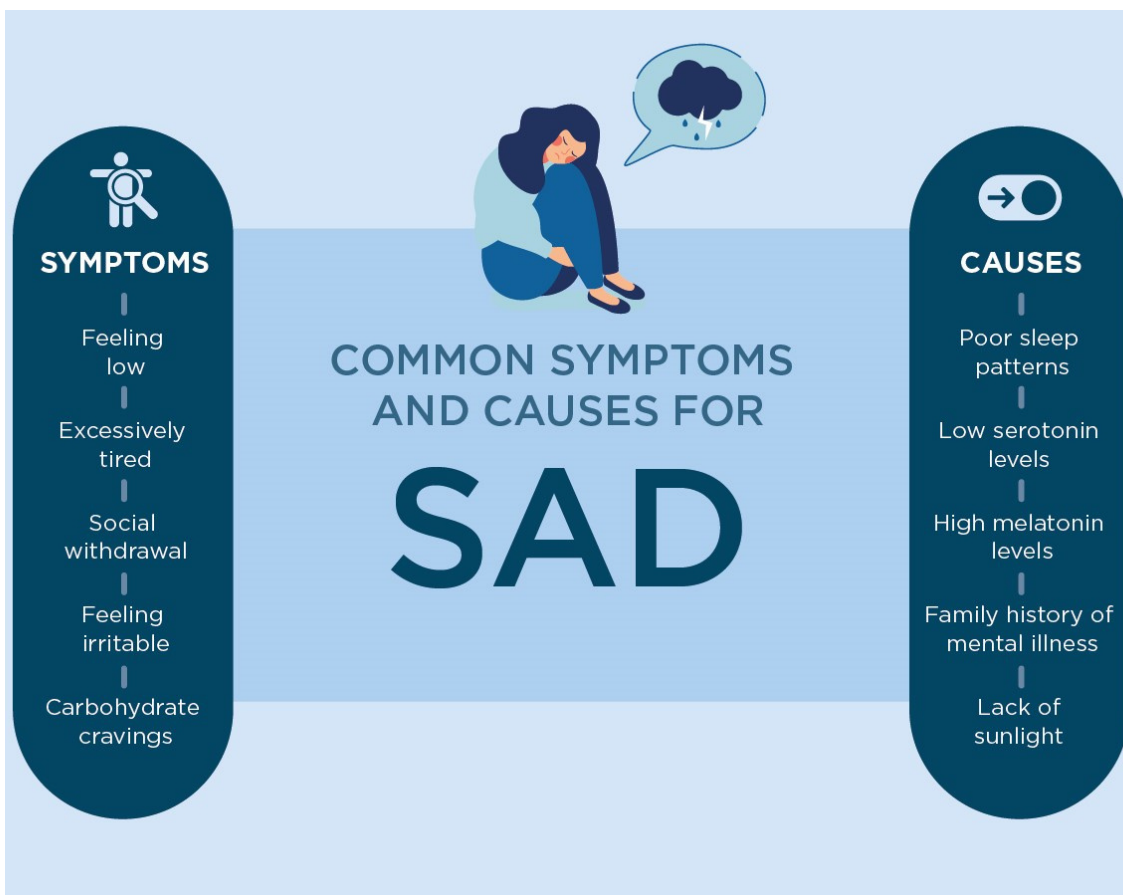
[Seasonal Affective Disorder: 15 Strategies to Help You Cope | Eddins Counseling Group - Houston & Sugar Land, TX](#)

[9 Self-Care Tips for Seasonal Affective Disorder | Psych Central](#)

Important Note: We apologize for the amount of ads on the links & APC does not endorse any of the ads associated on these sites

Most importantly, take care of yourself this season and remember that I am available here if you need any additional support.

Stay warm!



References

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