

February 2020 EAP Notes, Stay Resilient: Let the sunshine in!



Mind your mental health this winter

Although we begin the winter season with holiday cheer, many people feel a little “off” as the cold weather drags on. **Your mind is just responding to darker, longer and colder days.** Circadian rhythms, our body's natural clock that helps regulate important functions including sleep/wake cycles and mood. These rhythms are thrown off by the winter season. The sunrise is later in the morning, and darker earlier in the evening. However, our hectic schedules require us to keep going as if nothing has changed. This can affect your mental health.

Maintaining wellness

Exercising, eating nutritious foods, practicing mindfulness, and maintaining social support systems are core components of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Also, exercising 30 minutes a day may help your body release endorphins - “happy hormones.”

If you suffer from depression and anxiety, meditation can help. If you need help with tracking your meditation, there are plenty of apps like [calm](#) and [headspace](#) that can help. You could also benefit from other meditative practices like yoga, taking a quiet stroll in a park, or even closing your eyes to focus on listening to your favorite song can also be helpful. Keeping in touch with your family, friends, and other caring people in your life strengthens your sense of community, and provides you with a strong support system to call on when you feel down.

Let the sunlight in

Of course, we'd all like to have natural sunlight year round. But, not everyone lives in a place that they can get the ultraviolet light they need on a regular basis, especially during the wintery months. Some turn to light therapy through lamps. Sun lamps positively impact your body's regulation of melatonin (sleep/wake cycle) and serotonin (mood). Light therapy has been shown to benefit those with depression. Talk with your physician, on whether light therapy is right for you. Meanwhile, make sure when the sun is out, get out of your house and take it in as much as you can naturally.

When to seek help

Feeling a little “off” is typical during the winter months. Depression can set in...It is important to seek help if you have the following signs:

- depressed mood most of the day
- decreased interest in activities that you used to enjoy
- difficulty sleeping **or** sleeping more than usual
- moving slower **or** feeling more hyperactive during the day
- feeling tired and less energetic
- feeling worthless **or** excessively guilty
- difficulty concentrating more than usual

If you are experiencing these symptoms, or have thoughts of harming yourself or others, seek medical attention right away. It is also important to reach out to the supportive people in your life. If you notice these symptoms tend to occur in the winter months, you may suffer from seasonal affective disorder (SAD), which could benefit from medical treatment.

Does living a better life seem out of reach? A Best Care EAP counselor is available to help. Schedule your confidential appointment by calling **(402) 354-8000** or **(800) 801-4182**.