

# WINTER BLUES

COPING WITH SEASONAL DEPRESSION



**Kinwell**

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# Group Agreements

- Arrive on time, let facilitator know of planned absences
- Keep group confidential
- Silence cell phones, close other distractions
- Bring an attitude of acceptance and non-judgment for self and others
- Group is an “open” format, meaning people may join throughout the series
- Respond with chat box and emojis
- Please stay on mute unless speaking to the group
- Please be on camera

# What to Expect

**Week 1:** Introductions, Learn about SAD, Explore your seasonal patterns

**Week 2:** Circadian rhythm, Light therapy

**Week 3:** Mindset, thoughts & beliefs about winter; Challenging automatic thoughts

**Week 4:** Special guest Valerie Wintler, ARNP, joins us to talk about biological aspects of SAD, medications and supplements that help / don't help.

**Week 5:** Lifestyle supports: diet, exercise and substances; Stress management; Community and social engagement

**Week 6:** Create your individualized Winter Blues survival plan



# Introductions

# What is Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)?

- **A pattern of depression in the fall and winter, that typically improves in the spring and summer.**
- Symptoms include:
  - reduced energy
  - feeling slowed down in thinking and action
  - sadness
  - worry
  - less interest in things that usually bring enjoyment
  - increased appetite, cravings for sweets and starches
  - sleep problems
  - less interest in sex
  - lower self-esteem

# What is Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)?

- **Less commonly, people experience increased symptoms in the spring and summer. These are known as hypomania, and can include:**
  - elevated mood (uncomfortably high mood)
  - irritability, agitation
  - racing thoughts
  - decreased need for sleep
  - talking too much, and too fast
  - risky behaviors and poor judgment
  - excessive interest in sex
  - inflated self-esteem

About 5-7% of adults in the northern parts of the country experience SAD, and another 14% have milder winter blues

Seasonal Affective Disorder		Symptoms	
Seasonal Affective Disorder	vs	Major Depressive Episode	
✓ Similar symptoms		Depressed Mood	✓ Similar symptoms
 		Timing	   
++ More Likely to Gain		Effect on Sleep	+/- Gain or Loss
++ More Likely to Gain		Weight Gain	+/- Gain or Loss
✓		Responds to Antidepressants	✓
✓		Responds to Light Therapy	? Evidence is Unclear

Clearvue Health

# Diagnosing SAD

- Seasonal pattern of mood changes, typically worsening in the fall and winter, and improving in the spring and summer
- Rule out any other causes, especially if this is the first year you've had seasonal depression (e.g., medical problems that impact mood)
  - No specific labs are required to diagnose SAD, but it can be worthwhile to have a few basic labs checked (e.g. thyroid screen, anemia screen, metabolic panel, vitamin D) if your PCP thinks it is clinically indicated
- Seasonal pattern is not solely due to seasonal stressors (e.g. unemployment every winter)

# What causes SAD?

- **Biology:** circadian rhythm changes, genetics, hormones (like melatonin and cortisol), neurotransmitters (like serotonin), and some medical conditions (like hypothyroidism, hypoglycemia, and fibromyalgia)
- **Psychology:** your thoughts, beliefs, emotions, and behavior
- **Environment:** Seasonal darkness, stress, your daily routine, physical surroundings, cultural and social settings, relationships

# Distance from the equator impacts the prevalence of SAD

→ Washington is between 45° to 49° latitude



## Prevalence of SAD and the Winter Blues by Latitude

City/state/country	Latitude	Prevalence (% of sample)		
		SAD	WB	Total
Sarasota, Florida	27°	1.4	2.6	4.0
Maryland	39°	6.3	10.4	16.7
New York City	40°	4.7	12.5	17.2
Nashua, New Hampshire	42°	9.7	11.0	20.7
Fairbanks, Alaska	65°	9.2	19.1	28.3
Stockholm, Sweden	59°	3.9	13.9	17.8
Helsinki, Finland	59°	7.1	11.8	18.9
Oslo, Norway	59°	14.0	12.6	24.6
Reykjavik, Iceland	64°	3.8	7.6	11.3
Tromsø, Norway	69°	13.7	10.7	24.4
Nagoya, Japan	35°	0.9	0.8	1.7

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Notice that latitude is not the only thing influencing the rate of SAD...

# Facts about SAD



**SAD is 4x more common in women compared to men**



**SAD typically develops in young adulthood**



**People with more premenstrual mood changes are more likely to have SAD**



**Research suggests there is a genetic component to SAD**

# Your Seasonal Pattern

An aerial photograph of a mountain range with snow-covered peaks and slopes. The snow is unevenly distributed, with some areas appearing darker, possibly due to shadows or exposed rock. The text "Your Seasonal Pattern" is overlaid in a bold, orange font across the upper portion of the image.

# How Seasonal Are You?

Fill out the following information based on your experience over 3-5 years when you lived in a single climate - the most recent, the better.

## 1. In what months do you?

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Feel Best												
Gain the most weight												
Socialize most												
Sleep least												
Eat most												
Lose most weight												
Socialize least												
Feel worst												
Eat least												
Sleep Most												

## 2. How much do the following change with the seasons?

	0 No Change	1 Slight Change	2 Moderate Change	3 Marked Change	4 Extremely Marked Change
Sleep Change					
Social Activity					
Mood (overall feeling of well-being)					
Weight					
Appetite					
Energy Level					

## 3. How big a problem are the changes you experience with the seasons?

Mild	Moderate	Marked	Severe	Disabling

# Your Seasonality Score

- **Add up the numbers for all the items in question 2**
  - **8 -10 = moderate seasonality**
  - **11-14 = marked seasonality**
  - **15-24 = severe seasonality**



# Building Awareness

How does your seasonal pattern impact...

Your work?

The things you do for fun?

Your relationships?

Your sleep?

Your appetite?

Your energy and activity level?

The way you cope with stress?

Your use of alcohol, marijuana, or other substances?

# Next week...

- More about circadian rhythms and melatonin
- Light therapy

