

WINTER BLUES

COPING WITH SEASONAL DEPRESSION



Kinwell

Christine Heller, Ph.D.

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
- Stay on mute unless speaking to the group
- 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

Lifestyle Supports





Exercise

- Exercise is a proven anti-depressant!
- Even 20 minutes of exercise a day has mood, energy and health benefits
- Pick something you enjoy doing to help you stick with it
- Don't be afraid to go outside in bad weather to get some movement - wearing the right clothes can keep you comfortable outside year-round
- You can exercise outdoors for an extra dose of mood-lifting sunlight or set up your lightbox on your indoor workout equipment



Sleep

Sleeping well is a major support for your mental health

- Good sleep hygiene includes:
 - Consistent sleep schedule
 - Relaxing wind-down routine
 - Cool, dark, quiet, comfortable bedroom
 - Finish eating 2-3 hours before bedtime
 - Limit caffeine, alcohol and nicotine use
 - Keep electronic devices in a different room
 - Only use the bed for sleep and sex

Eating Habits

- Weight gain in the winter is common, especially for people with the Winter Blues.
- Feeling more depressed and low energy can make us turn to food for comfort, and lose motivation to exercise
- Do your food preferences or eating habits change from season to season?



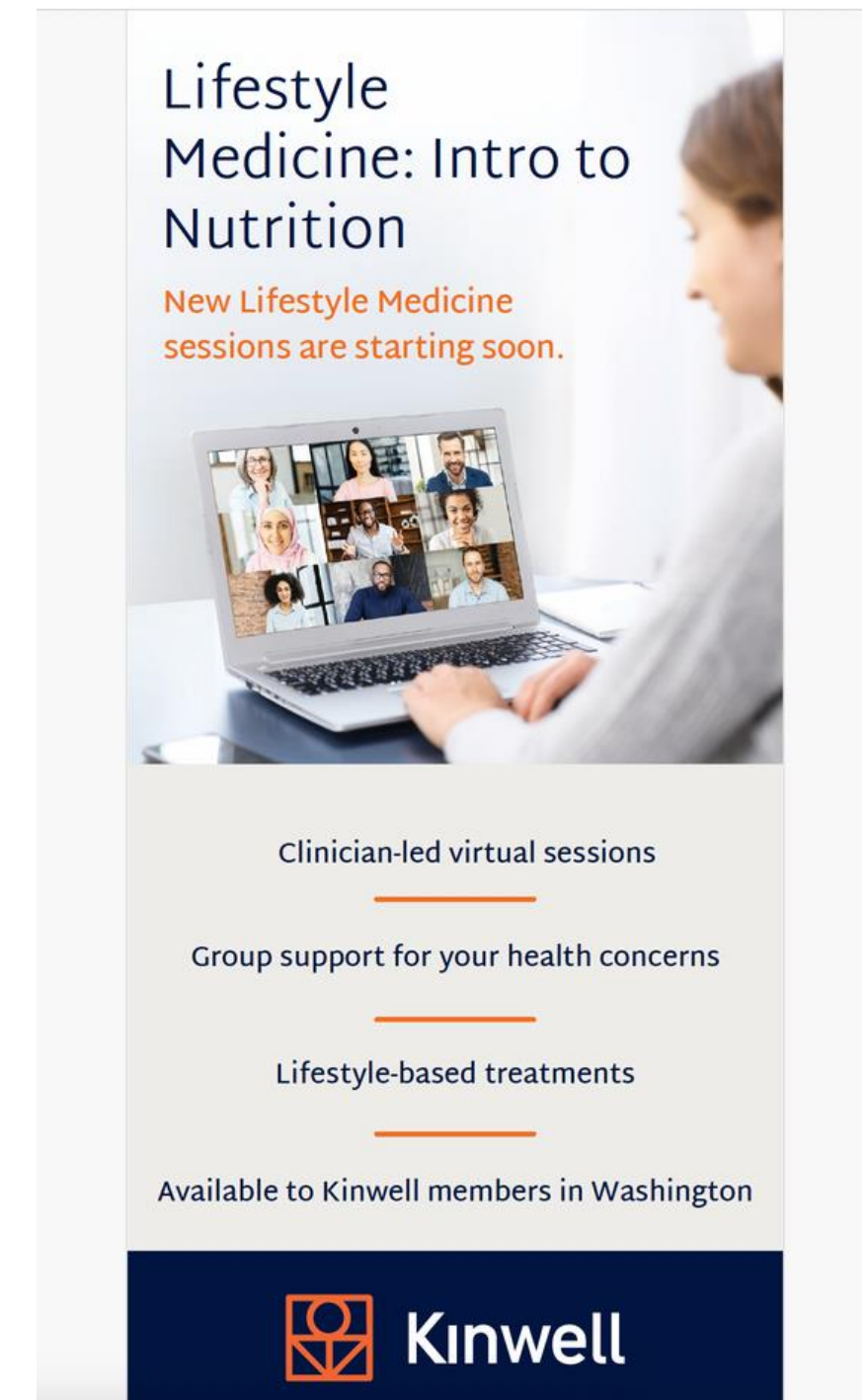
Diet

Eat regular meals throughout the day, starting with breakfast.

Staying fueled helps your mood and energy.

If you want to make changes to your diet, consider:

- Less high sugar items - sugar crash can make mood worse
- Less highly processed foods – these are associated with depression and anxiety
- More high fiber foods (vegetables, fruit, whole grains, and legumes) – helps you feel more satisfied, and regulates your blood sugar, which helps mood



Lifestyle
Medicine: Intro to
Nutrition


New Lifestyle Medicine
sessions are starting soon.

Clinician-led virtual sessions

Group support for your health concerns

Lifestyle-based treatments

Available to Kinwell members in Washington

 Kinwell

If you want more support with your diet, talk to your PCP or sign up for Kinwell's Intro to Nutrition class



Substances

- **Alcohol:** causes rebound depression for up to 2 days after you drink, and lowers energy.
- **Marijuana:** worsens depression, lowers motivation, increases appetite, and causes lethargy.
- **Caffeine:** stop by lunchtime to protect your sleep, and thus your energy and mood.

Do you have any seasonal patterns to your substance use?

What could you do (especially in the evening) to relax in place of substances?

Tips for cutting down

- Cut down on how many days weekly you use alcohol or other substances
- Track your use so you are aware of how much you consume
- Socialize without substances – schedule a walk, or getting tea, etc
- Find alternatives such as non-alcoholic cocktails
- Start your use of substances later in the day than you normally do





Stress Management

Identify: What are your sources of stress?

- What is in your control? What is outside of your control?

Understand: How does stress affect your body, thoughts, and emotions?

Build resilience to stress:

- Relaxation
- Movement
- Social support
- Healthy lifestyle choices
- Challenging Automatic Negative Thoughts



Mindfulness Practice

Engage in your community



Next week:

- Create your Individualized Winter Blues Survival Plan to use this year and in future years
- Wrap up and goodbyes!

