

Is It More Than Just the Winter Blahs?

Volume 7, Issue 2

February 11, 2013

Psychology Month, Dufferin-Peel C.D.S.B.

Is it more than just the winter blahs?



Everyone gets the winter blahs sometimes. Feeling sad on occasion occurs in most people and is normal. Ongoing depression is not. But how can you tell the difference? Here are some guidelines.

Sadness	Depression	Depression
Everyone experiences sadness at times. It's a healthy part of life.	Not everyone experiences depression. It can be very unhealthy.	Not everyone experiences depression. It can be very unhealthy.
Sadness tends to happen in response to certain events (e.g., the death of a loved one, the break-up of a relationship, or even our long Canadian winters!).	Sometimes we have no idea why depression happens. It may appear "out of the blue" and not be linked to any specific event.	Sometimes we have no idea why depression happens. It may appear "out of the blue" and not be linked to any specific event.
We tend to feel better as the time since the event increases.	Depression can be very long lasting or it can appear and reappear.	Depression can be very long lasting or it can appear and reappear.
We still tend to see ourselves and other people the same way (e.g., think we are a good person with skills and talents).	Changes may occur in terms of how we see ourselves and others (e.g., we may see ourselves more negatively and not feel as good about ourselves as we used to).	Changes may occur in terms of how we see ourselves and others (e.g., we may see ourselves more negatively and not feel as good about ourselves as we used to).
We may be less impaired (i.e., the feelings may get in the way of what we have to do everyday less) and for a shorter period (depending on the event).	We may have a very hard time getting things done (e.g., going to work or school, spending time with others) and this may last for a long period.	We may have a very hard time getting things done (e.g., going to work or school, spending time with others) and this may last for a long period.

You can also use the 4 **D**'s. Think about your sadness. Is it:

Disproportionate (does it seem too much based on the circumstances/what happened?)

Disruptive (does it get in the way of your everyday life?)

Distressing (are the feelings very intense and uncomfortable?)

Duration (have the feelings lasted longer than would be typical for you or someone else under the same circumstances?)

If your low mood is just the winter blues, building emotional resilience can help you cope.



Take care of yourself.

- Recognize the things that make you vulnerable to stress and less able to cope (e.g., being hungry, angry, lonely, tired, sick). Eat regularly and well, get enough sleep, and build moderate physical activity into your life. Develop a support system of friends, family, or other people.

Manage your time.

- Use an agenda to schedule all your commitments. Break down tasks into manageable parts. Create deadlines, prioritize, and be selective. Don't over-commit and learn to say "no."

Relax.

- Practice deep breathing, meditation, guided relaxation, or yoga. Create a soothing environment for yourself (e.g., avoid high levels of noise, listen to relaxing music).



Practice balanced thinking.

- Try to keep perspective. Use positive/productive self-talk instead of putting yourself down. Notice when things are going well and be proud of your efforts. Be flexible and keep your expectations realistic.

If you think you have more than just the winter blues, get help! To learn more, check out the following:

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/depression/index.shtml>

<http://www.apa.org/topics/depress/index.aspx><http://www.apa.org/topics/depress/index.aspx>

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/diseases-maladies/depression-eng.php>

<http://mooddisorders.on.ca/speakup.html#>

<http://moodgym.anu.edu.au/welcome>

http://www.helpguide.org/mental/suicide_help.htm

Susan Sweet, PhD.

For further information contact the psychology staff member at your school or Dr. Debra Lean, Chief Psychologist. You can access this or other interesting articles at: <http://w3.dpcdsb.org/CEC/Programs/Special+Education/Support+Services/PSY/Resources.htm>