

## Taming the Winter Blues

### Tips for Coping with Decreased Daylight and Seasonal Affective Disorder

If the decrease in sunlight has gotten you down, you're not alone. Turning the clocks back means darker days and longer nights, which can be a rough transition for many. It can also cause Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), a condition that affects millions of Americans. Science has proven that the amount of light can change people's moods and susceptibility to depression.



Take note of your mood, body and behaviors. People with SAD may experience:

- Anxiety
- Apathy
- Change in appetite/cravings
- Fatigue
- Feelings of hopelessness/discontent
- Irritability
- Poor concentration
- Sadness
- Social isolation
- Weight gain

You could ride it out, knowing that “springing forward” may resolve many of these symptoms. Or you could make the most of the winter months, knowing that SAD is highly treatable with various therapies and self-care. For example:

- **Volunteering** can boost your mood and satisfaction
- **Getting regular aerobic exercise** can elevate your mood and prevent weight gain
- **Getting exposure to natural and artificial light** helps regulate the part of the brain that controls our sleep-wake cycle; note; there are many UV-free Light Therapy Lights on the market
- **Connecting with supportive people**—even virtually—reduces isolation; think about a peer support group or joining activities beyond your social circle if need be
- **Reciting daily affirmations and/or expressions of gratitude** can help to improve your self-esteem and outlook on life
- **Seeking professional help** can offer insight, perspective and tools for modifying thoughts, behaviors and emotional responses related to psychological distress

Please be reminded that **Johns Hopkins Employee Assistance Program — JHEAP** offers you and your household members free, confidential, 24/7 access to professional counseling for any issue that's on your mind, as well as provider location and referrals for everyday needs, including support groups, volunteer opportunities, health and wellness practitioners, and more.