

# Welcoming Winter



*Your guide to overcome Seasonal Affective Disorder*



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# *Welcoming Winter*

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## **What is Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)**

- ☀️ A type of depression that is related to changes in the seasons and happens around the same time every year
- ☀️ Often starts in the fall and continues into the winter months due to the lack of sun light as days get short and dark

## **Some Symptoms of SAD**

- ☀️ Fatigue
- ☀️ Reduced energy
- ☀️ Irritability
- ☀️ Loss of interest in activities
- ☀️ Inability to focus and think clearly
- ☀️ Changes in appetite – craving food high in carbohydrates
- ☀️ Weight gain
- ☀️ Social isolation
- ☀️ Sleep problems- sleeping more
- ☀️ Lowered sex drive

## **Causes**

- ☀️ Biology – Physiological conditions and predispositions. Genetic tendencies
- ☀️ Psychology – Your thoughts, emotions, behavior and the amount of stress in your life
- ☀️ Environmental- Your physical surroundings, your daily routine and your relationships. How much light you're getting and when and how you're getting it

## **Targets for Managing Your SAD**

- ☀️ Light up your world
  - Adding light, light therapy, getting away to a sunny location
- ☀️ Free your mind
  - Stress management, support, meditation and relaxation, and psychotherapy
- ☀️ Your balanced brain
  - Diet, exercise, consider supplements and medications

## **Planning**

- ☀️ Plan ahead
  - Identify worst and best months
- ☀️ Start treatment early
- ☀️ Begin with simplest treatments
- ☀️ Add treatments in layers as needed
- ☀️ Peel off the layers of treatment one by one as days begin to lengthen again
- ☀️ Create an annual plan for beating SAD

# *Getting Started*





## Fall

- ☀️ Meet with your PCP, behavioral health therapist, dietician and others that can help prepare for winter
- ☀️ Purchase or replace light fixtures
- ☀️ Start holiday preparation
- ☀️ Spend as much time as possible outdoors, in sunlight
- ☀️ Look into going on vacation to a sunnier location
- ☀️ Review diet and exercise regimens and make shifts towards health now
- ☀️ Catch up with friends and family now, before you start feeling less sociable
- ☀️ Keep windows unobstructed
- ☀️ Start using your light box by sitting in front of it for at least 10 minutes twice a day. If twice is too much, start by using it once a day for 10 minutes.
- ☀️ Plan fall activities such as apple picking, visit a pumpkin farm, football games, hikes in the midday sun
- ☀️ Preserve foods and stock up for winter
- ☀️ Wear bright colored clothes - associate cold weather with brightness instead of darkness



## Winter

- ☀️ Increase light therapy time to 30-45 minutes (especially in the early evening due to the extra hour lost to darkness) *\*Do not exceed 45 minutes at a time*
- ☀️ Seek light - Get outside in sun, if it's too cold take a drive or spend time indoors in the brightest room of the house.
- ☀️ Use light box every day
- ☀️ Stick to an exercise routine
- ☀️ Start a morning routine such as taking a walk now that it's lighter in the morning
- ☀️ Start medication or talk to your PCP about a trial of medication
- ☀️ Ask for help with decorating or preparing for holidays
- ☀️ Ask for understanding from family and friends if you need to limit activities
- ☀️ Work hard at not feeling guilty about limitations
- ☀️ Take along your light box if traveling
- ☀️ Cut back on chores and replace them with scheduled pleasant activities
- ☀️ Meditate or use positive imagery of springtime
- ☀️ Focus on the positive of winter. Find something that you enjoy and focus on that



## Spring

- ☀️ Keep using light therapy, gradually taper off once spring seems to be staying
- ☀️ Participate in spring activities – baseball season, May Day, Memorial Day weekend trip
- ☀️ Catch up on chores that were put off in winter
- ☀️ Use time to start creative projects
- ☀️ Reward yourself for getting through another winter
- ☀️ Buy new houseplants or forced bulbs – Spring is around the corner when they bloom!



Make sure you write down what works and what doesn't work to create your annual plan to use for years to come



# *Light Up Your World*



## Starting Your Light Box Therapy

*\*Always check with your PCP before starting a new regimen\**

*\*Do not use light box therapy if you have Bipolar Disorder\**

- ☀️ Set up light box where you plan to use it the next day before starting your therapy
- ☀️ It's important to keep a regular sleep schedule (Example: 11pm-7am)
- ☀️ Use the light box as early as possible upon rising. Use an alarm if needed.
- ☀️ Sit 11"-12" from your light box and make sure the light reaches your eyes. Do not sit with your head down
- ☀️ Do NOT stare into the light box
- ☀️ Start with 20 minutes a day of light box therapy. 10 minutes in the morning and 10 in the early evening. Monitor for the the first week. If there is no bothersome side effects keep it up for another week. \*If you are starting later in the season and symptoms are peaking, try 20 minutes twice daily and then evaluate. If no side effects, add 10 minutes a day to each session until you are at 45 minutes twice daily. Try to stay on schedule for a full 2 weeks, then evaluate. Make sure you are doing light therapy at least once a day

☀ Be prepared to adjust light therapy as needed

☀ Within two weeks symptoms should be improving

☀ If you notice any issues with your light box therapy before the trial period is over, call the Ignite staff to assist and troubleshoot any problems

## **Possible positive side effects from light therapy**

- ☀ Increased energy
- ☀ Clearer mind
- ☀ Brighter mood
- ☀ Tranquility
- ☀ Decreased sleepiness
- ☀ Increased sociability
- ☀ Fewer carbohydrate cravings

## **Possible negative side effects from light therapy**

- ☀ Headaches
- ☀ Eye Strain
- ☀ Dry eyes
- ☀ Irritability/anxiety
- ☀ Insomnia
- ☀ Overactivity

## Things to do in front of the light box

- ☀ Paperwork – bill paying, checkbook balancing, etc
- ☀ Time on the computer
- ☀ Fold laundry
- ☀ Prep foods for upcoming meals
- ☀ Read
- ☀ Do your nails
- ☀ Listen to music or watch TV
- ☀ Make phone calls
- ☀ Write a note to a friend
- ☀ Have breakfast in front of light box

## Adding Light to Your Home

- ☀️ Make temporary changes by choosing décor like bright or light colored pictures or curtains, pillows, throw blankets or seat coverings
- ☀️ Add extra lamps or increase wattage in light bulbs
- ☀️ Paint walls white, yellow, or ivory rather than dark colors
- ☀️ Replace a large piece of furniture with something light and bright
- ☀️ Move furniture so that it is facing bright windows
- ☀️ Clean grime off of windows
- ☀️ Trim foliage from around windows

# *Free Your Mind*



## Stress Management Tips

- ☀️ Keep a positive, realistic approach
- ☀️ Focus on what you accomplished for the day, no matter how big or small and the amount of time you spent on it
- ☀️ Know that depression can sometimes cause problems with concentration and memory, so writing notes or lists and keeping track of things on a calendar could help
- ☀️ Use relaxation techniques \*see next page
- ☀️ Time management could make you feel more in control and less stressed
- ☀️ Don't let anything keep you in bed late. You miss out on the therapeutic early morning sunlight. Set an alarm or have someone call you
- ☀️ Get support from family, friends, groups or behavioral health professionals. Think about what kind of support you want from them and write it down
- ☀️ Schedule activities you enjoy doing each day for at least 10 minutes (If you can not think of anything, pick something you enjoyed in the past)
- ☀️ Helpful thoughts and positive thinking



## Relaxation Techniques

☀️ Drink a cup of tea

☀️ Take a warm bath

☀️ Read

☀️ Listen to soothing or uplifting music

☀️ Call a friend

☀️ Watch a movie

☀️ Relaxation exercises such as meditation or deep breathing

☀️ Spend time with an animal or pet

☀️ Do a small service or favor for someone else

## Simple Relaxation Exercises

### Belly Breathing

1. Sit down comfortably, or lay down on a yoga mat, depending on your personal preference.
2. Place one of your hands on your stomach, just below your ribcage. Place the second hand over your chest.
3. Breathe in deeply through your nostrils, letting your first hand be pushed out by your stomach. You should find that your chest stays stationary.
4. Breathe out through your lips, pursing them as if you were about to whistle. Gently guide the hand on your stomach inwards, helping to press out the breath.
5. Slowly repeat between 3 and 10 times.

### Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Start by tensing and relaxing the muscles in your toes and progressively working your way up to your neck and head. You can also start with your head and neck and work down to your toes. Tense your muscles for at least five seconds and then relax for 30 seconds, and repeat.

### Imagery

Try to use as many senses as you can, including smell, sight, sound and touch. If you imagine relaxing at the ocean, for instance, think about the smell of salt water, the sound of crashing waves and the warmth of the sun on your body. You may want to close your eyes, sit in a quiet spot and loosen any tight clothing.

# *Your Balanced Brain*



## Exercise

- ☀️ Exercise is a proven antidepressant and it promotes weight control
- ☀️ Choose a form of exercise that you enjoy, so that you will stick with it and will not add more stress
- ☀️ Any moving can count as an exercise – you can try dancing to a favorite upbeat song, or do some vigorous vacuuming or dusting, or snow shoveling
- ☀️ Reward yourself for exercising (Go shopping for a new workout outfit or have coffee with a friend)

## Diet

- ☀️ Fact: People with SAD may have a slower metabolism than others
- ☀️ Cut down on carbohydrates
- ☀️ Eat foods higher in protein, fiber and Omega-3 fatty acids
- ☀️ Drink plenty of water

*\*Call your Ignite staff for help with meal planning and ideas*

## **Supplements and Medications**

*\*always consult with your PCP before starting any new supplement or medication*

### **Supplements that might help with SAD**

- ☀️ Vitamin D and B vitamins such as B1 and B12 play a role in producing brain chemicals that affect mood

### **Medications**

- ☀️ Antidepressant medications are an effective treatment that should be considered when other remedies are not enough to help you with your SAD

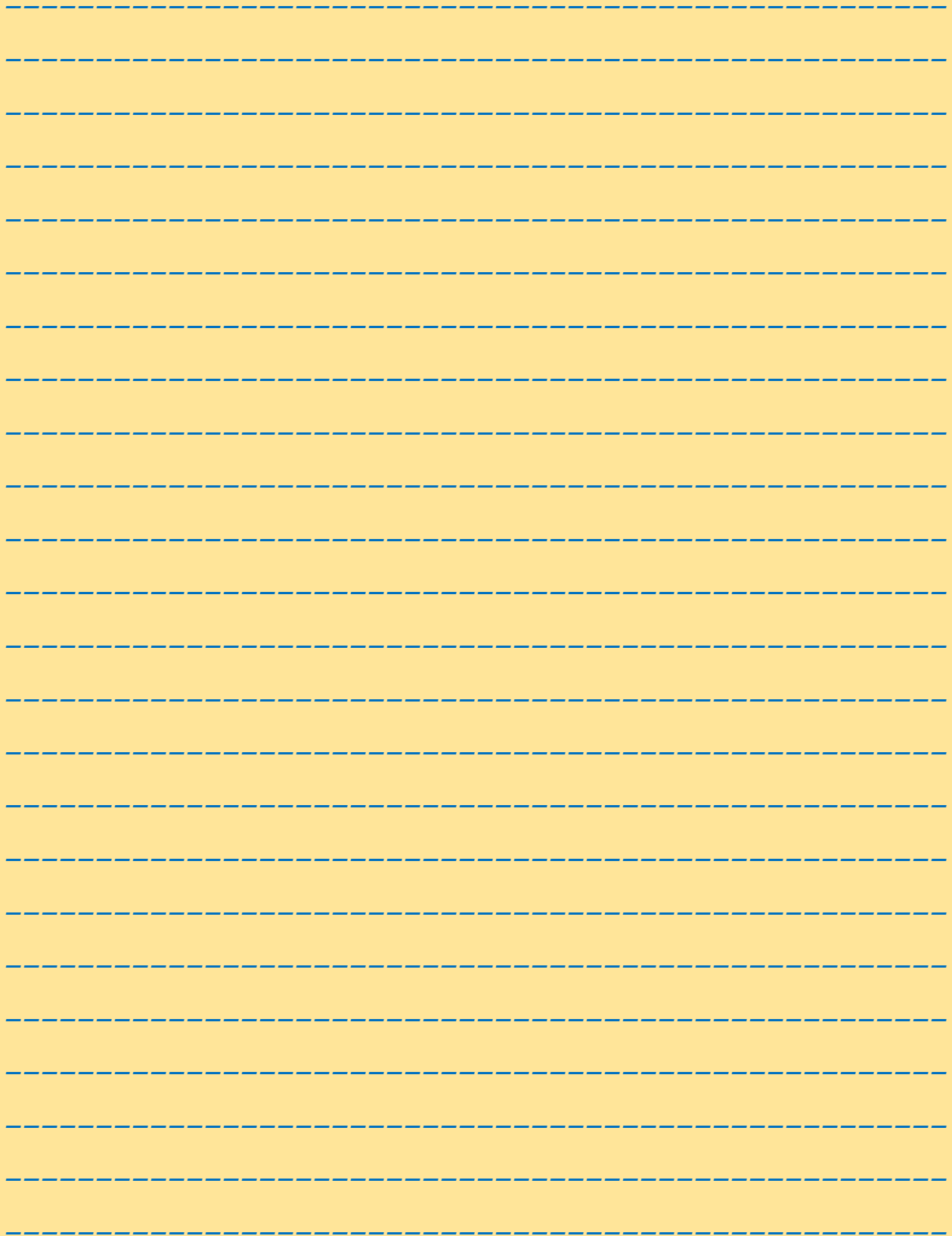
## Resources

- ☀ Rosenthal, N. E. (2013). *Winter blues: Everything you need to know to beat seasonal affective disorder*. New York: Guilford Press.
- ☀ Rosenthal, N. E., & Benton, C. M. (2014). *Winter Blues: Survival Guide*. New York: Guilford Press.
- ☀ Seasonal Affective Disorder. (2014, September 12). Retrieved August 24, 2016, from <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/seasonal-affective-disorder/basics/definition/con-20021047>

# Welcoming Winter Notes

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*Where your care comes together.*

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