

# PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

## EMPLOYMENT COUNSELLING

### How to Manage Seasonal Depression



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Department:  
Employment and Labour  
**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

# INTRODUCTION

- Seasonal depression (or Seasonal Affective Disorder), is a type of depression that occurs during certain seasons, particularly during winter months, when there is less sunlight.
- Some people find it difficult to adapt easily to seasonal changes.



# Causes



- Researchers aren't yet clear on what causes, but it's a complex and multifaceted condition. They suggest the following biological innate factors:
- malfunctioning hypothalamus (the area of the brain that regulates mood, sleep and appetite) or
- too much production of melatonin (a hormone that controls our sleep-wake cycle, which is produced by the brain's pineal gland) or
- disrupted circadian rhythm – the natural, internal clock process that regulates our sleep-wake cycle.



# Symptoms

It can be unbearable and debilitating to adapt to an extreme new climate change. This change is the beginning of a long, emotionally draining periods that can trigger intrusive symptoms. Symptoms can vary from one person to another and may be mild to severe, but typically include:

- Low mood, sadness and fatigue
- Loss of interest or pleasure in things you previously enjoyed, avoidance and isolation.
- Change in appetite patterns
- Changes in sleep patterns and eating patterns.
- Feeling worthless.



# Treatment

- 1. Light Therapy:** Light therapy involves using a light lamp that imitates natural outdoor light. It works to regulate neurotransmitters and hormones that regulate mood, cognition, reward, learning, memory, and numerous physiological processes.
- 2. Physical exercises:** Staying active can help to improve mood and alleviate anxiety. Regular exercise releases endorphins, which are natural mood-boosters, and it helps to reduce stress levels
- 3. Social Support and Connections:** Maintaining social connections can be crucial in handling seasonal depression. Meeting with friends, family or joining support groups can help to fight feelings of isolation and loneliness. Stay connected with family and friends to keep a sense of normality and togetherness in life, by using video calling, messaging, and social media.

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4. **Mindfulness:** Mindfulness meditation is a simple and effective way to focus on the present moment and become more aware of your thoughts and feelings. It helps one to eliminate disturbances and refocus on important things to be done.

5. **Eating a Balanced Diet:** Eating a balanced diet with plenty of fresh fruits, vegetables, and omega-3 fatty acids is important to help improve mood and overall wellbeing. Avoid a diet high in carbohydrates and low in vitamins and minerals can worsen symptoms of depression.

6. **Keep a routine that supports your health and well-being:** Staying active, praying, meditation, and getting regular daily exercise, making sure that you are well-rested, eating healthy meals on a regular schedule, setting safe boundaries and realistic goals, trying to stay positive, preparing your mind for daily challenges but not pondering on things you can't control, staying in touch with friends and family members, setting aside time for activities that you enjoy. Encourage clients to make their own list suitable and responsive to their own needs.

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**7. Talking to a Professional:** In the case when feelings of anxiety persist, as it can allow for more personalized and in-depth support through counselling to develop coping strategies, talk therapy, cognitive-behavioural therapy, mindfulness (or refer further in case beyond one's scope of competency).

**8. Prescription medications:** Many antidepressants work well for seasonal depression. Your medical provider can help you determine which medication or over-the-counter supplements can work best for your specific symptoms, based on your medical history.

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# Thank You...



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