

Beating the Winter Blues



While you may not be able to change the weather or amount of daylight during the winter, you can practice good self-care to help you feel better:

Take a Break From the News Being indoors more often means an increase in screen time. And if this time is spent consuming a non-stop news cycle, you may feel yourself getting anxious. To help minimize stress, try to limit the amount of time you spend in front of a screen. If possible, schedule one hour for news. You can watch this in one sitting or break it up into chunks.

Boost Your Mood with Food A simple change to boost your mood is to consider the food you eat. Consuming protein with breakfast, lunch, and dinner can enhance mood and prevent sugar and carb cravings later in the day. Also, including foods high in vitamin D such as fatty fish, fish oil, and vitamin D fortified foods like milk, orange juice, breakfast cereal, yogurt, and other food sources can help balance mood. If you are not getting enough vitamin D in your diet or through sunlight, talk to your doctor about taking a supplement, especially in the winter months.

Keep Up Your Sleep Routine Sleep is a huge component of mood. Our circadian rhythm can get disrupted, which ALSO disrupts our cortisol rhythms and impacts hormone production. Here are a few tips to improve your sleep:

- **Go to bed and wake up** at the same time every day
- **Follow a simple bedtime routine** that signals rest, such as taking a bath, turning down the lights, or drinking a cup of herbal tea
- **Expose yourself to light** as soon as you wake up
- **Sleep** in a cool, dark room
- **Don't use electronics** in your bedroom
- **Write all of your things (you're concerned about) on a piece of paper** before bed so that if you wake up in the night, you can tell your mind you don't need to worry because the thoughts are captured on paper and will be waiting for you to tackle in the morning

Do Some Physical Activity Physical activity has been shown to boost mood, decrease the symptoms of depression, and reduce stress. *Start slowly and build up to 30 to 60 minutes a day, five days a week, of aerobic exercise, strength training, yoga, or other fitness-related activities.* Getting outside daily, even for a few minutes a day, can make a huge impact on your mood and help target the specific symptoms of SAD related to a lack of daylight. If you feel you aren't pulling yourself out of the winter blues, give Best Care EAP a call at **402-354-8000** or **800-801-4182** or email eap@bestcareeap.org. **Counselors are just a phone call away.**