Employee Wellness Toolkit | November 2024  
**Kaiser Plan Members**

(Small Group/Community Rated)

**EMAIL ARTICLE**

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Stay Positive This Winter: Your Guide For Managing Seasonal Depression

For people with seasonal affective disorder (SAD), the annual change from summer to fall can come with feelings of sadness, pessimism, and frustration. Less sunlight and shorter days can cause chemical changes in the brain, leading to reduced energy and an overall negative mindset.

If you think you may be struggling with SAD, here are seven steps you can take to stay happy and healthy this winter:

1. **Prioritize Your Sleep:** Focusing on the quality and duration of your sleep will help you adjust to the changing seasons. Try setting a regular sleep schedule so that you are going to bed and waking up at the same time every day. Avoid blue-light emitting devices such as laptops and cell phones as you wind down to sleep for the night.
2. **Do Activities You Enjoy:** Taking time for enjoyment is important, especially if you are experiencing seasonal depression. Dedicating time to your hobbies can help improve your mood and stimulate your brain.
3. **Exercise Regularly:** It’s no secret that physical activity can help fight feelings of fatigue, stress, and anxiety. To start, try walking for 30 minutes at the end of the day before progressing to more advanced exercises.
4. **Maximize Light Exposure:** Natural light can help your body produce serotonin, which helps to regulate your mood. Even on a cloudy day, try to spend 10 to 20 minutes outdoors so that you are exposed to natural light.
5. **Make Small Dietary Changes**: Whole foods, such as meat, fruits, vegetables, and grains, can help boost your energy without relying on processed sugars and caffeine. The benefits gained from eating healthy foods are much more sustainable, and you’re less likely to “crash” in the middle of the day.
6. **Stay Connected:** Having a support system can help you navigate your experiences with SAD. Staying socially connected with friends and family is proven to improve mental health and make you less vulnerable to the negative effects of seasonal changes.
7. **Consult a Professional:** If your depression persists, you should consult a healthcare professional. Depending on the severity of your symptoms, your doctor may propose methods such as light therapy or antidepressants.

Seasonal affective disorder can impact every facet of your life if left untreated. Even if your symptoms are minor, taking action in small and manageable ways can do wonders for your mental health.

**READ MORE**

[What is Seasonal Affective Disorder?](https://helpwhereyouare.com/content/70150/?e=001)

[SAD Treatments](https://helpwhereyouare.com/content/100865/?e=001)

**ALWAYS THERE FOR YOU** | Your Mental & Behavioral Health Benefits

**Kaiser Permanente** - Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., call [1-888-287-2680](tel:+1-888-287-2680) to be matched with a mental health specialist in your area or help you find addiction treatment. For help after hours, call t [1-800-297-6877](tel:+1-800-297-6877). Here’s what you need to access the other resources available to you:

* **Calm App:** The number one app for sleep and meditation – designed to help lower stress, anxiety, and more. [Sign in to kp.org to get started.](https://healthy.kaiserpermanente.org/washington/front-door)
* **Headspace Care (formerly called Ginger):** Text one-on-one with an emotional support coach anytime, anywhere. Support is just a text message away. [Sign in to kp.org to get started.](https://healthy.kaiserpermanente.org/washington/front-door)

**SLACK OR TEXT MESSAGE**

*Use this copy to send a group message to your team through Slack, text, or other messaging platform*

A person in a yellow jacket looking at the sunset

Description automatically generated

**Stay Positive This Winter: Your Guide For Managing Seasonal Depression**

As the days get shorter, many people experience changes in their mood and behavior. For people with seasonal affective disorder, the changing seasons can come with feelings of sadness, pessimism, and frustration. If you think you may be struggling with SAD, here are seven steps you can take to get back to your usual self:

1. **Prioritize Your Sleep:** Try setting a regular sleep schedule so that you are going to bed and waking up at the same time every day.
2. **Do Activities You Enjoy:** Dedicating time to your hobbies can help improve your mood and stimulate your brain.
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