



Seasonal Affective Awareness: Supporting Mental and Emotional Health During Darker Months

As daylight shortens and temperatures drop, many people begin to feel a shift not only in the seasons, but in their emotional and mental well-being. Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) and winter-related mood changes are common and can affect anyone, including students, families, workers, and seniors.

For individuals living with Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS), winter can present added challenges. Increased time indoors may lead to higher exposure to fragranced products, cleaning chemicals, and poor ventilation. These triggers can contribute not only to physical symptoms such as fatigue but also to stress and emotional strain. Awareness and prevention help us create healthier shared spaces where everyone can feel safe and included.

Understanding Seasonal Affective Changes

Seasonal mood shifts exist on a spectrum. Some experience mild winter fatigue or lowered motivation, while others may struggle with more persistent symptoms. Common signs include:

- Low mood, sadness or irritability
- Difficulty concentrating or feeling mentally “foggy”
- Increased tiredness or changes in sleep patterns
- Reduced interest in socializing or activities
- Cravings for carbohydrates or appetite changes
- Feeling disconnected or withdrawn



If these symptoms interfere with daily life, professional support can be helpful. Seeking help is a sign of care, not weakness.

Strategies for Supporting Well-Being in Winter

Taking small, intentional steps can help maintain emotional balance during darker months.

1. Increase Exposure to Natural Light

Even short periods outdoors or near windows during the day can help regulate mood and sleep cycles. For some, light therapy may also be beneficial.

2. Maintain Healthy Indoor Air Quality

With more time spent inside, clean air becomes essential. Choose fragrance-free and non-toxic cleaning and personal care products. Increase ventilation whenever possible, and aim for the lowest-emission products.

3. Build Connection and Community

Social interaction is a powerful buffer against seasonal stress. Checking in with friends, joining group activities, or reaching out to someone who may be isolated can nurture a sense of belonging.

4. Create Supportive Daily Routines

Gentle movement, stretching, mindfulness, reading, or creative hobbies can bring stability and joy. Routines offer structure and something positive to look forward to.

5. Nourish Mind and Body

Balanced meals, hydration, and nutrient-rich foods support energy and emotional health. Some individuals explore vitamin D supplementation under



professional guidance.

6. Reach Out for Support When Needed

Counsellors, peer groups, community programs, and health professionals are available to help. Prioritizing mental health is part of whole-person well-being.

Final Thoughts

Although the darker months come with challenges, they also offer the opportunity to be intentional about our habits and environments. By incorporating light, movement, connection, fragrance-free and least-toxic practices into our daily routines, we can support our well-being and that of people living with MCS. Wellness is not one big change - it's a series of small, thoughtful choices.