

Lifestyle

What you can do to cope with the winter blues

The fall and winter months can bring joy to people who like the cold temperatures and don't mind snow and ice. Others just bundle up and endure the cold months. But a small number of people experience an affliction known as "the winter blues, or seasonal affective disorder.

According to the American Psychiatric Association, seasonal affective disorder (aptly also known as SAD) is identified as a type of depression called Major Depressive Disorder with Seasonal Pattern. Six out of every 100 people experience SAD, with January and February being the most brutal months. SAD can affect anyone but is most common among women and teens.

People with SAD have problems with their hormonal transition from

day to night. They produce higher than normal amounts of melatonin, a hormone that an individual's brain produces in response to darkness. Melatonin helps with the timing of the circadian rhythms (24-hour internal clock) and with sleep.

Melatonin increases at night to help people feel sleepy and wears off in the morning to help us wake up. But people with SAD don't stop releasing melatonin in the morning, and so don't wake up feeling refreshed and ready for the day.

Signs and symptoms of SAD include: increased sleep and daytime drowsiness; irritability and anxiety; fatigue or low energy level; feelings of guilt and hopelessness; increased appetite, especially for sweets and car-

MENTAL WELLNESS

Brenda Kempa

bohydrates; sleep disturbances such as insomnia, or difficulty staying or falling asleep; and struggling to concentrate.

There are several ways to fight off Seasonal Affective Disorder. One is light therapy. The National Alliance on Mental Illness recommends a daily exposure to a light therapy box. The light box should provide an exposure to 10,000 lux of light and it's recommended for use one within the first hour of waking up in the morning, for approximately 20 to 30 minutes.

And there is some truth to the old

saying, "You are what you eat." Eating high amounts of processed foods, refined fats, refined carbohydrates, added sugars, high-fat dairy products, and red meat, can not only negatively impact your waistline but your mood. Instead, eat foods that include omega-3 fatty acids and vitamin D to support brain health, such as salmon and rainbow trout, according to the National Institutes of Health. Eat raspberries, blueberries, and strawberries to cure the sugar cravings. Eat green leafy vegetables such as kale, spinach, and collards, which provide B vitamins that are good for brain function.

Exercise also can ease the effects of SAD. Exercise releases endorphins, which are hormones that reduce pain and increase feelings of well-being.

Any low-impact aerobics activities, including dancing or walking, can help. Other beneficial activities include doing yoga, gentle stretching, performing tai chi, running, swimming, or strength training. It's not necessary to become a marathon runner to gain the benefits of exercise. You can benefit from just 10 minutes a day of activity, including housework or other similar tasks.

If SAD is interfering with your daily life, work, or relationships, speak with your health care provider. There are additional treatment options available and together with light therapy, diet, and exercise, you can beat SAD.

Brenda Kempa is a member of the Healthy Adams County Board of Director and Behavioral Health Task Force.

I wish I would have called sooner

When Kathy and her husband Peter elected hospice they received compassionate care from nurses, personal care aides, the social worker, a chaplain and other staff and volunteers.

According to Kathy they got so much more: Peter got to grasp onto as much of life as he had left. He got to have a future by participating in his wants and needs. He got to vote in the last presidential election. He got the freedom to stay at home. He got to feel love and compassion from people who were once strangers and then became like family. He got to live without suffering. He got to spend time with his newborn grandson. He got to make peace with siblings who had not been speaking to each other.

He got to remain at home, which

was his fondest wish, until he passed away. He and Kathy both got to know that people were there for them. Kathy got the sense of security knowing that she could call for help when Peter fell. She got peace of mind knowing that everything will be ok and even now, after Peter has passed, she and her sons are still getting help with their grief. Their sons got a whole year to say goodbye to their dad. Peter was in our hospice care for 13 months.

While all hospice clients and their families receive the utmost quality and compassionate care, most don't get to us early enough for us to provide as much help as we'd like. Many people are dying without hospice care at all. These people are going to die whether they have hospice care or not, so why

SENIOR CORNER

Ginny Davis



are they not getting it? There are several reasons.

Perhaps the most frustrating reason for my colleagues and me at Spirit Lutheran Home Care & Hospice is that people misunderstand what hospice means. Many people think that hospice means "giving up" that hos-

pice is "the last resort" when nothing more can be done. To the contrary, hospice is the "something more" that can be done to help live life to the fullest.

Choosing hospice is simply changing the focus of care from curing the disease to controlling the symptoms. There is still hope. With good pain and symptom management, information and support, clients, like Peter, are able to concentrate on what is meaningful to them. Kathy told me, "For a loved one you want the best, you want them to look at it as not the end and you want them to live day to day at their fullest potential." That's what Kathy and Peter got. I wish that all of those who are living with a terminal illness could get that.

If you are wondering when it's time to call hospice for yourself or a loved one, then the time is probably now. Even if it's not quite yet time to be admitted to hospice, it's best to know about hospice as early as possible in the disease process. We often hear from our client's families that they wished they would have called us sooner.

Understanding the hospice option will open the door to more choices, at a time when options seem to be shrinking.

Ginny Davis is the community relations co-ordinator for Spirit Lutheran Home Care & Hospice. For more information or to start care, please call 1-800-840-9081 or visit www.SpiritLutheranHC.org.

Hiking or walking, both excellent exercise

The Physical Fitness Task Force offers both free hikes and walks in our beautiful Adams County. Occasionally people will ask about the difference or tell us that they can't do hikes. So last month when I saw Ed Riggs' article in the *Gettysburg Times* titled "The definition of a hike is best left to the individual" it perked my interest.

In his article he quoted the Outdoors at Weekends website as stating "Hiking is the activity to describe adventurous walking out on uneven trails in natural settings experiencing the delights of nature". We try to follow this definition; walks – even surface, hikes – uneven, but, some of our walks can actually be a bit more hike-like than some of our hikes. An example is a walk on a farm or orchard path can be more uneven than a hike on a

logging trail. So, in our descriptions of our hikes and walks we try to always describe the walking surface, so individuals can make their own decisions, just like Ed Riggs recommended. We also label our hikes as easy, moderate or difficult depending not only on the unevenness of the surface but also the steepness and duration of some inclines. If you ever have questions about the difficulty of a walk or hike, please ask us – often there is a bypass or a turnaround that would skip a more difficult section.

There are many great benefits to outdoor recreation – whether it be walking or hiking. Exercise in general offers great cardiovascular benefits as well as mental and emotional perks and even helps prevent diseases such as diabetes and cancer. Exercising out-

PHYSICAL FITNESS TASK FORCE

Betsy Meyer



doors has the added benefit of being a calming influence. Scientists have actually measured changes in brain waves during outdoor exercise that cause relaxation. They say that any relief from stress (which negatively affects both memory and mood) also helps the brain. Interestingly, neuroscientists have found that hiking offers

one additional benefit of improving memory tied directly to the uneven surface discussed above.

Dr. Sarah McEwen from the Pacific Neuroscience Institute explains that when you are hiking on natural terrain you have to use special navigational skills, your memory, and attention with every step. This is much more cognitively challenging than walking on a treadmill or even some sidewalks. The extra focus required is especially good for your hippocampus which is a region of your brain essential for learning, memory and navigation. Additionally, they explain that the thinking involved in hiking involves neuroplasticity which is the nervous system's ability to accommodate new information. She says this is the "vital superpower of our nervous system". Studies have shown

that older adults who learn new complex skills like hiking show marked improvements in memory.

Whether you want to see if this memory stuff is true for you, or just want to get out and enjoy nature, please consider joining the Physical Fitness Task Force Winter Hikes. Please join us on Sundays, Feb. 20, March 13 and April 27 at 1:30 p.m. for some socially-distanced group hiking. Please check www.facebook.com/healthyadamscounty or call 717-337-4137 for more details.

Betsy Meyer is a member of the Physical Fitness Task Force of Healthy Adams County. The group meets by Zoom on the second Friday of each month. If you are interested in volunteering please call the above number.

Sulky sister wants to visit; gossip comes back to bite

Dear Annie: My sister and I are in our sixties. We are less than a year apart in age but have never really been close emotionally.

We had a rough childhood, in which it was all about survival. Once we were adults, we both moved away and only saw each other a few times a year. I married my current husband over 20 years ago. He is the kind of person you either love or dislike. My sister dislikes him.

About 10 years ago, I moved about 2,000 miles from where my sister, "Jan," lives to take a job that I really enjoyed. Shortly after I moved, Jan informed me that her daughter was getting married. I love my niece very much, but having recently moved and started a new job, I decided not to go to the wedding and told my sister this. She has never forgiven me and brings it up every time I see her. What's

DEAR ANNIE

Annie Lane



more, she blames it on my husband and makes all kinds of rude comments toward him.

Now coming to the point. I have been diagnosed with cancer. I may not have many years left, and Jan wants to visit me. I love her, but at this point, I am protecting myself from negativity and drama. Our last visit really ended badly, and I know I can't deal with that now. Jan says "she's at a point in her life where she says what she wants no matter who likes it."

Please help me. I don't know how to tell my sister that I don't want to see her, but I can't deal with her nasty

comments and living in the past. — Living for Today

Dear Living: My heart goes out to you, and I commend you for your thoughtfulness in this trying time.

Things like terminal illnesses have a way of putting things in perspective. I am guessing that when Jan heard the news of your diagnosis, she forgot all about your absence at the wedding and her dislike of your husband. Your shared past must dwarf these petty disagreements.

There are times when it's appropriate to distance yourself from certain family members, especially when you're protecting your mental or physical health.

But is there not a piece of you that wants to reconcile with your sister? Allow Jan to visit on the condition that she leaves her negativity at home, 2,000 miles away.

Dear Annie: You were right on the money to tell the "Mother-in-Law Who Wants to Keep Her Ears Clean" to tell that gossipy mom to keep her daughter's business to herself. Hope-

fully, "Clean Ears" informs her daughter-in-law of her mother's constant gossip. That was my mother to a T, gossiping about me at family functions, and I wish my in-laws told her to mind her own business.

When my mother-in-law just ignored it, my mother took the silence as acceptance. Soon, my mother went further and started to tell others at family events. Unfortunately, in order to stop it, we couldn't invite her any longer to get-togethers. — Thank You for Looking Out

Dear Looking Out: Gossip usually comes back to bite us. If we don't speak up to stop it, then we are just enabling it to continue. Thanks for this reminder.

"How Can I Forgive My Cheating Partner?" is out now! Annie Lane's second anthology — featuring favorite columns on marriage, infidelity, communication and reconciliation — is available as a paperback and e-book. Visit <http://www.creatorspublishing.com> for more information. Send your questions for Annie Lane to dearannie@creators.com.



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