



WASHINGTON HEALTH SYSTEM  
Center for Mental Health and Wellbeing

# MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



## Seasonal Depression Awareness Month

Many people associate the holiday season with bright, twinkling lights and spending time with their families and friends. But that's not always the reality for everyone. If you've noticed lately that you aren't feeling the holiday spirit, it's not just you.

December is Seasonal Depression Awareness Month. Each year, millions of people struggle with Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) but may not recognize the symptoms or know how to treat the disorder. To recognize Seasonal Depression Awareness Month, Cameron's board-certified psychiatrist and neurologist Dr. Melchor Mercado is sharing his expertise on SAD and advice to those who may be experiencing symptoms.

### What is SAD?

According to Dr. Mercado, SAD is a mood disorder that occurs at the same time every year. SAD occurs most often among young adults but is not limited to that specific age group. For many people, SAD typically occurs in the fall and winter months due to the decrease in daylight hours. This disorder is more common in the Northern Hemisphere and in those who have a history of mental health struggles.

Symptoms of SAD include:

- Social withdrawal
- Loss of appetite
- Irritability or anxiety
- Increased sleep (hypersomnia)
- Low energy
- Weight gain
- Depressed mood

### Treatment Options

If you are experiencing the above symptoms on a recurring, yearly basis in the late fall and winter, you may be experiencing SAD. Dr. Mercado suggests that if you aren't already seeing a therapist or psychiatrist, you should set up an appointment with your primary care physician to receive a referral to psychiatry services. A psychiatrist can help you identify specific ways you can personally combat SAD. Consistent exposure to sunlight can help lessen symptoms of SAD. To supplement sunlight in the winter when days are short, Dr. Mercado recommends purchasing a light therapy device that mimics sunlight and turning it on for 1-2 hours a day. Light therapy lamps are available for purchase at most major retailers both in-store and online.

Seasonal depression is quite common and if you're experiencing symptoms, it's important to remember that you're not alone and there's nothing to be ashamed of! Dr. Mercado encourages everyone to ask for help if you think you might need it. Be sure to talk to your doctor about what you're experiencing and figure out what's the best option for you. To read the full article and get the statistical data and graphs, please visit: <https://www.cameronmch.com/blog/seasonal-depression-awareness-month/>

December  
2023



### Month

National Stress-Free  
Holidays Month

Seasonal Depressional  
Awareness Month

### Day

World AIDS Day  
(Dec. 1)

International Day of  
Persons with Disabilities  
(Dec. 3)

Human Rights Day  
(Dec. 10)

To learn more visit:

<https://sacwellness.com/mental-health-awareness-calendar/>



## Stress-Free Winter Holidays



### Teach Kids What's Important at the Holidays!

Make sure children are aware of the reason for, and the primary message of each holiday you celebrate. Receiving gifts may be the child's focus until you explain the origin and broader meaning of the holiday. Lights (stars, lamps, candles), food, and gifts often play a central role in winter holidays.

1. Greet the holidays as joyous family events.
2. Brainstorm the shopping list as a family.
3. Keep the kids busy with holiday fun.
4. Create family traditions.
5. Play and sing together.
6. Treasure today for tomorrow.
7. Herald the new year.
8. Declarations and Decorations of Love.
9. Hearty Mealtime.

To read the full article, please visit:  
<https://www.crayola.com/for-parents/party-ideas/stressfree-winter-holidays.aspx>

## Stress-Free Winter Holidays

One after another, the holidays in December and January add warmth to the cold winter. Unfortunately, they can also add stress for busy families. But they don't have to. Here are some tips to keep your family cool and calm, so the holiday memories are warm and colorful.

### Stay cool, calm and collected...

From Chanukah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, and Boxing Day through the New Year, families come together to share and build memories. That's why December is known as National Stress-Free Family Holidays month. How can busy families do that? Organize, plan, and decide if you really need to do everything you have planned. Keep the tone warm by staying cool. Frantic parents may be trying too hard and defeating the goal of building warm memories.

### Keep a Planning Calendar.

Set dates to complete key tasks and record upcoming events. A calendar will help organize your plans in order of when each task must be done. For example, select the date that you will:

- Select party invitations - The Crayola.com [Coloring & Activities](#) has great party invitations for Christmas, Chanukah, and Seasons Greetings.
- Send party invitations.
- Select and send holiday cards.
- Create holiday decorations - Check out the Print & Celebrate Holidays in the [Coloring & Activities](#) and holiday ideas in [Arts & Crafts](#).
- Plan the party and or holiday meal menus and prepare shopping lists.
- Make handcrafted gifts - Search for "Gifts to Make" in [Arts & Crafts](#).
- Complete gift and party supply purchases.
- Make travel arrangements and check out Crayola.com [tips for traveling with kids](#).
- Wrap holiday gifts - You can [make your own wrapping paper](#).
- Bake traditional foods and holiday.

Identify which of these tasks you will do with your children. Enjoy a feeling of accomplishment as each of the tasks on your calendar are completed.

### Ask for help.

You don't have to do all the cleaning, cooking and shopping alone. Can you hire a cleaner, caregiver, or caterer? Which jobs can you assign to other family members? How can you divide the work or make your list less overwhelming?

Be sure you enjoy your own holidays and parties. Encourage peace and caring for others this holiday season. Let family and friends know that the gift of time helping each other is as precious as wrapped gifts. Crayola.com wishes you safe, heart-warming holidays.

### Involving the Kids in Winter Holidays

Children's fond memories can be of working together -- cooking and decorating for the holidays, as well as enjoying the fruits of their labors.

To read the full article, please visit: <https://www.crayola.com/for-parents/party-ideas/stressfree-winter-holidays.aspx>



Dear Valued Referral Sources,

This holiday season, we would like to thank you for giving us your support and referrals. We wish you and your family a wonderful holiday season and Happy New Year! Stay safe and warm!

Sincerely,

***Jennifer Campbell, MSW, LSW***

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# WHS Center for Mental Health & Wellbeing



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Greene County Crisis Line: 1-800-417-9460

Washington County 24-Hour Crisis Hotline: 1-877-225-3567

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255

Greenbriar Treatment Facility: 1-800-637-4673

SPHS, Center of Excellence Opiate Use Disorder Hotline: 1-888-810-8595

STTARS Sexual Assault Hotline (Greene & Washington): 1-888-480-7283