



Seasonal Affective Disorder

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Care Made **Real**



Agenda

1. Criteria and Symptoms of SAD
2. Causes of SAD
3. Self-Help for SAD
4. Supporting Each Other at Work
5. EAP

Defining SAD

DSM-5: Major Depressive Disorder, recurrent, with seasonal pattern.

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is a type of depression that's related to changes in seasons. Symptoms may begin in autumn and continue through the winter months. These symptoms often resolve during the spring and summer months. On rare occasions, SAD can cause depression during the spring or summer months which resolve in the autumn or winter months.



Depression

A condition in which one feels discouraged, sad, hopeless, unmotivated, or disinterested in life in general.

6% of the Australian population experience depression every year.

Major Depressive Disorder - Criteria A

5+ symptoms, occurring nearly everyday for a 2-week period



Depressed mood, most of the day



Diminished interest in all or almost all activities



Insomnia or hypersomnia



Feelings of worthlessness



Fatigue or loss of energy



Psychomotor agitation



Significant weight loss or fluctuation of appetite



Diminished ability to think or concentrate



Suicide ideation, plan or attempt

Major Depressive Disorder - Criteria B - E

B. Symptoms cause clinically significant distress in social, occupational or other important areas of functioning

C. The episode is not caused by a substance or medical condition

D. The symptoms are not better explained by various psychotic disorders

E. There has never been a manic or hypomanic episode

Seasonal Pattern Specifier



- A. Regular temporal relationship between MDD episodes and a particular time of year (autumn/winter)
- B. Full remissions also occur at a characteristic time of year (depression disappears in spring)
- C. In the last two years, 2+ MD episodes occurred in autumn/winter and no MD episodes occurred in spring/summer
- D. Seasonal MD outnumbers the non-seasonal MD over the individual's lifetime

SAD Symptoms


Winter-Onset

- Feeling Sad
- Lack of Energy
- Sleeping too much
- Difficulty waking up in the morning
- Feeling hopeless, worthless or guilty
- Overeating and carbohydrate cravings
- Gaining weight
- Low interest in normal activities

Summer-Onset

- Difficulty sleeping
- Poor appetite
- Weight loss
- Feeling agitated or anxious
- Irritability
- Increased reactivity

Case Scenario #1



Melanie is a 32-year-old physiotherapist who lives in Hobart. In July of 2020, Melanie began experiencing periods of depression, lethargy, and excessive sleeping. Melanie attributed her symptoms to the impact of Covid-19 and did not seek support. Her symptoms largely remitted by January 2021. However, she began experiencing similar symptoms in July 2022. In addition, she noted that she was eating more than she had previously, and as a result had gained 7kg.

Melanie made an appointment with her GP, who ruled out all potential medical causes of the symptoms she displayed. She was referred to a psychiatrist who ruled out other causes of depression and was diagnosed as having seasonal affective disorder (SAD).

Case Scenario #2



You notice that your work colleague Daniel has been withdrawing from social meet-ups, has been working from home a lot more, and has stopped turning on his video during meetings. You had similar concerns about Daniel last year around EOFY.



You decide to reach out to Daniel and let him know you are concerned about him. You mention that you know winter months can be difficult for some people and ask if he needs any support from you. Daniel lets you know that he appreciates you reaching out and has been considering seeing his GP.

Your conversation with Daniel motivated him to seek support, he visited his GP and received a SAD diagnosis. Daniel was referred to a psychologist to support him towards positive wellbeing.

Biological Causes of SAD (winter)

Melatonin Levels

Melatonin is a hormone that regulates the sleep-wake cycle.

Darkness stimulates melatonin secretion. Winter months can lead to an overproduction of melatonin which increases sleepiness.

Serotonin Levels

Serotonin is a feel-good neurotransmitter that influences our mood. Sunlight and Vitamin D can help maintain normal serotonin levels.

Reduced sunlight and Vitamin D during autumn and winter can hinder serotonin production, which can trigger feelings associated with depression.

Circadian Rythm

We have a natural internal body clock that regulates our sleep, mood and appetite.

Reduced sunlight during autumn and winter can 'damage' this body clock, causing confusion, impacting mood and affecting sleep.

Prevalence of SAD

< 1%
of Australians will experience
SAD in their lifetime

- SAD is under-reported in Australia
- Many Australians will report symptoms of SAD and experience “winter blues” but very few will meet criteria for SAD
- Winter SAD increases in countries that are furthest away from the equator
- Summer SAD increases in countries closer to the equator
- SAD is more common (4 x) in females than males
- 5% in the US, 6% in Canada, 2% in the UK



Treatment for SAD



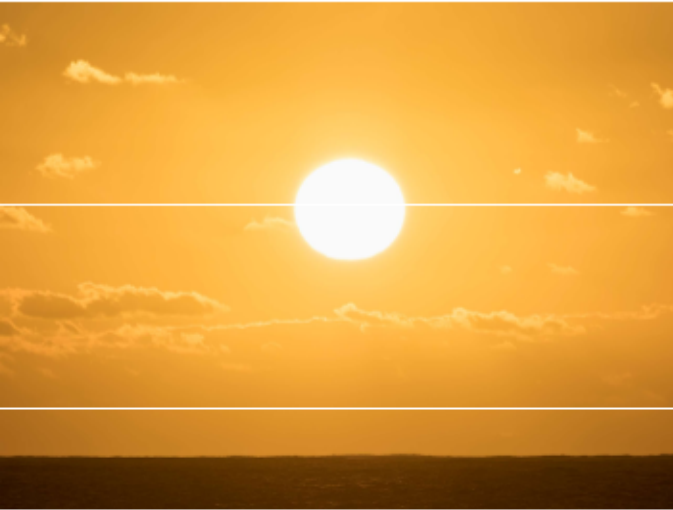
Light Therapy

Vitamin D Supplements

Psychological Support

Anti-Depressants

Self-Help



1. Get outside as much as possible



2. Exercise regularly

Self-Help



3. Form healthy eating habits



4. Reach out to friends or family

The Five Spheres of Resilience



PSYCHOLOGICAL



EMOTIONAL



SOCIAL



PHYSICAL



SPIRITUAL

Create Positive Emotions

Practise gratitude

Journal your meaningful experiences

Engage in humour

Daily joyful activity

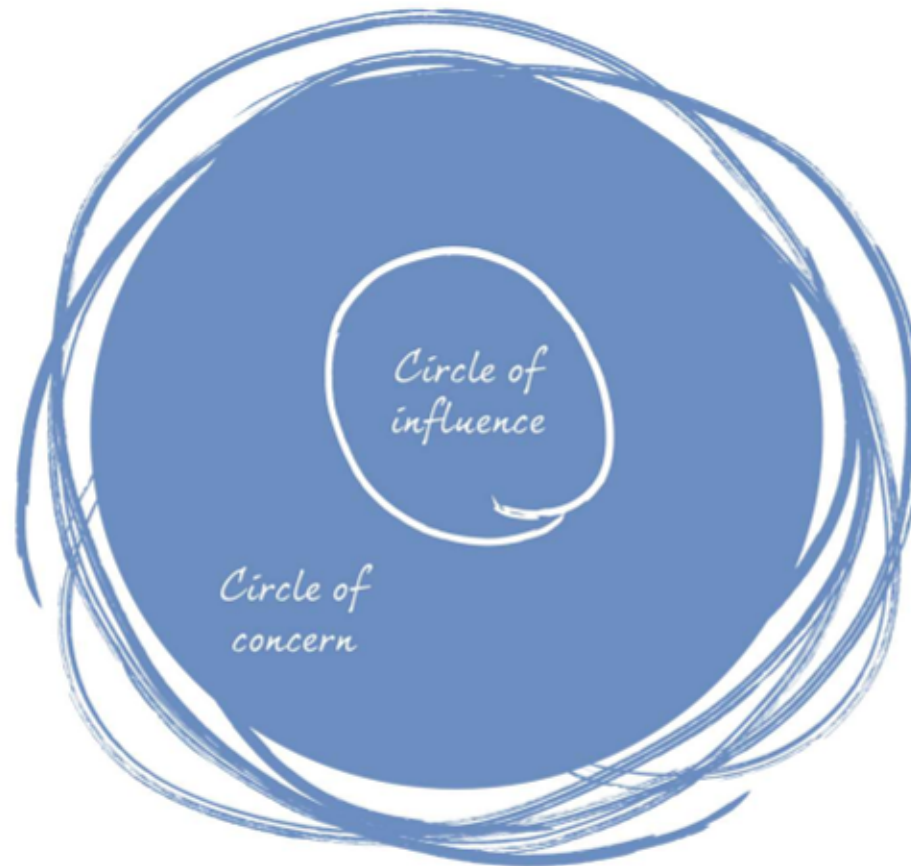
Learn something new

Observe one new thing

Go out in nature



Where Are You Investing Your Energy?



A Model for Supporting Mental Health at Work

Look



- Identifying signs of psychological distress
- Duty of care
- The mental health continuum
- Mentally healthy workplace

Listen



- Checking in and having the conversation
- Showing empathy
- Exploring reasonable work adjustments
- Supporting return to work

Link



- Guiding to support
- Looking after your own mental health
- Available support and resources

Checking In

Look

*"What's been happening? How are you going?"
"You don't seem like yourself and I'm wondering are you ok?"*

"I noticed that you have your camera off more during our meetings. How are things going with you?"

Listen

"What's that been like?"

"I didn't realise that you were going through this"

"I'm glad you felt comfortable to tell me"

"I may not be able to understand exactly how you feel, but I care about you and want to help"

Linking to Support

Link

"Who have you been able to talk to about this/how you're feeling?"

"What can we do to help you here at work?"

"What have you been able to do in the past?"

"How much information do you have about support resources?"

"How about making some time for an appointment with your doctor/EAP?"

"You can find a psychologist through the APS 'Find a Psychologist' tool: [Find a Psychologist | APS \(psychology.org.au\)](https://www.psychology.org.au)"

The DO'S and DON'TS

DO

Speak in private/confidentiality
'What' questions
Raise concerns about observable behaviours only
Open-ended questions
Reflect and summarise "so what I hear you saying is..."
Open body language
Ask: what helps, what has helped before, what they think might help

DON'T

Diagnose / assume a diagnosis
'Why' questions
"Don't worry, you'll be ok"
"Just think positive"
"You can snap out of it if you want to"
"Think about everything else going on in the world"
"We all just have to get on with it."
"At least..."

Your Self Care Plan

	Activity	Frequency	Resources	Review	Support
Physical Activity					
Food Intake					
Social Connection					
Mental Fitness					

Our Contemporary EAP model



A comprehensive 8 stream model offering proactive support

- Addressing the key areas in life that are known to cause concern
- Aligning with all areas of health and wellbeing
- Delivered by key specialists

Connecting to Your Converge EAP

Booking an Appointment

Call **1300 OUR EAP (1300 687 327)** (Aus)
0800 666 367 (NZ) | **+613 8620 5300** (Intl)

Visit **www.convergeinternational.com.au**
to access our Live Chat service or book.

Download our **EAP Connect App** to connect
with us through the Appointment icon.



Questions



We Want Your Feedback



Consultant: Dee Chopra
Training: SAD
Date: 21/07/22

<http://bit.ly/TrainingProgramFeedback>

Thank you

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