



Toolbox TALK



IS IT SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER OR THE HOLIDAY BLUES?

As we enter the winter months amid the holiday season, it's essential to be aware of the potential impact this time of year can have on mental health. Two common conditions, [Seasonal Affective Disorder \(SAD\)](#) and the holiday blues, are similar and [affect men and women equally](#).

SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER

SAD is a type of depression brought on by changes in seasons. Because it usually starts in autumn and continues through winter, when there is less natural sunlight and shorter days, it is also known as winter-pattern SAD or winter depression. Some people, though, experience SAD during the summer months. Less common than its counterpart, [summer-pattern SAD](#), also known as summer depression, occurs in the spring and summer. General symptoms of SAD are like those associated with depression and can include feelings of hopelessness, fatigue, and social withdrawal.

HOLIDAY BLUES

However, it's important to note that not all feelings of sadness during the winter months are related to SAD. Many people experience what is commonly referred to as the "holiday blues." Various factors, including financial stress, family conflicts, unrealistic expectations, and feelings of loneliness or isolation, can cause this. According to the [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#), "the difference between the holiday blues and clinical anxiety or depression is that the feelings are temporary." Unlike SAD, which lasts around 40 percent of the year, the holiday blues usually affect a person from November through early January. Symptoms can include tension, frustration, sadness, or a sense of loss.



IS IT SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER OR THE HOLIDAY BLUES?

WHAT YOU CAN DO

While several recommendations, such as eating well, getting exercise, and practicing self-care, apply to maintaining mental health overall, there are specific treatments unique to managing SAD and the holiday blues.

Seasonal Affective Disorder



Treatment for SAD falls into four categories that can be used individually or combined.

- ▶ Light therapy
- ▶ Psychotherapy
- ▶ Antidepressants
- ▶ Vitamin D.

Holiday Blues

- ▶ Prioritize self-care.
- ▶ Set and keep realistic expectations for the holidays.
- ▶ Maintain a regular schedule.
- ▶ Get enough sleep,
- ▶ Eat a balanced diet and limit alcohol consumption.
- ▶ Stay physically active.
- ▶ Spend time with friends and family.
- ▶ Help others. Volunteer or practice a random act of kindness.
- ▶ Pursue activities that bring you joy and help you relax.
- ▶ Write to-do lists.
- ▶ Budget.
- ▶ Recognize (and try to avoid) the triggers that cause your stress and anxiety.
- ▶ Seek help. Contact a mental health professional or reach out through an employee assistance program if your company offers one.

Date:

ATTENDANCE RECORD

SUPERVISOR:

CREW MEMBERS PRESENT:

COMMENTS/FEEDBACK:
