



Embracing the Autumn Blues

Coping Strategies for Seasonal Affective Disorder

As the vibrant colours of summer fade away and the days grow shorter, many individuals experience a shift in mood commonly known as the "autumn blues." For some, this seasonal change can lead to a more pronounced condition called Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). In this article, we will explore the impact of seasonal changes on mental health. Additionally, we will provide practical tips and coping strategies to help you manage symptoms and improve your overall well-being during the autumn months.

Understanding Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

Seasonal Affective Disorder is a type of depression that typically occurs during the autumn and winter seasons when daylight diminishes. Reduced exposure to natural light can disrupt the body's internal clock and affect neurotransmitter levels, leading to symptoms such as low mood, lack of energy, increased sleepiness, and changes in appetite.

The Impact of Seasonal Changes on Mental Health

The transition from summer to autumn can have a profound effect on mental health. The decrease in sunlight can disrupt the body's production of serotonin, a neurotransmitter that helps regulate mood. Additionally, the disruption of circadian rhythms can lead to feelings of fatigue, sluggishness, and a general sense of low energy. Understanding the underlying causes of SAD can help individuals recognise and address their symptoms effectively.

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Suggested Coping Strategies

While Seasonal Affective Disorder can be challenging, there are numerous strategies and lifestyle adjustments that can alleviate symptoms and promote well-being. Here are some practical tips to embrace the autumn blues:

Light Therapy

Light therapy involves exposure to bright, artificial light that mimics natural sunlight. Using a lightbox or a light therapy lamp for around 30 minutes each morning can help regulate circadian rhythms, elevate mood, and reduce SAD symptoms. It is crucial to consult a healthcare professional for guidance on the appropriate light therapy device.

Maximise Natural Light

Make the most of the available natural light by opening curtains, sitting near windows, and spending time outdoors during daylight hours. Prioritise activities that allow you to soak up sunlight, such as taking walks in the park or engaging in outdoor hobbies.

Stay Active

Regular physical exercise has been shown to boost mood and reduce symptoms of depression. Engage in activities you enjoy, such as walking, jogging, yoga, or joining group fitness classes. Exercise not only releases endorphins but also improves overall well-being.

Create a cosy Environment

Make your living space warm, inviting, and filled with soft lighting. Incorporate warm colours, cosy blankets, and scented candles to create a comforting atmosphere. Surround yourself with things that bring you joy and enhance relaxation.

Maintain a Balanced Diet

Pay attention to your nutrition during the autumn months. Incorporate mood-boosting foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids, such as fatty fish, walnuts, and flaxseeds. Additionally, consume a variety of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains to support overall well-being.

Practice Mindfulness and Self-Care

Engage in mindfulness techniques, such as meditation and deep breathing exercises, to reduce stress and enhance self-awareness. Prioritise self-care activities that promote relaxation, such as taking baths, reading, practicing hobbies, or spending quality time with loved ones.

Seek Support

Don't hesitate to reach out for support. Connect with friends, family, or support groups who can provide understanding and companionship during this time. If symptoms persist or significantly impact your daily life, consult a mental health professional who can offer guidance and explore treatment options.

While seasonal changes can impact mental health, it's important to remember that there are strategies to cope with and manage symptoms effectively. By implementing practical tips such as light therapy, maximising natural light exposure, staying active, creating a cosy environment, maintaining a balanced diet, practicing mindfulness, and seeking support, individuals can embrace the autumn blues and enhance their overall well-being during this season. Remember, self-care and seeking professional help when needed are crucial steps in navigating seasonal affective disorder and reclaiming a positive outlook.

One-pan Mushroom and Spinach Chicken

Get ready to delight the whole family at dinner time with this unbeatable one-pan mushroom and spinach chicken recipe! It's a quick and easy dish that's bursting with flavour. In just 15 minutes, you'll have four servings of tender fillets, perfectly cooked in a creamy, dreamy sauce. With just 9 simple ingredients and 3 easy steps, this dish is not only delicious but also hassle-free. So, let's get cooking!

Ingredients

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 4 Chicken Breast Fillets
- 1 leek, pale section only, thinly sliced
- 200g cup mushrooms, sliced
- 1 tsp minced garlic
- 1 tbsp plain flour
- 300ml light cooking cream
- 60g packet of Baby Spinach
- 1 tbsp chopped chives

Instructions

- Heat half the oil in a large deep frying pan over medium-high heat. Use a sharp knife to cut 3 slits in the top of each piece of chicken. Cook for 4 mins on each side or until just cooked through. Transfer to a plate. Cover to keep warm.
- Heat the remaining oil in the pan over medium heat. Cook leek, mushroom and garlic, stirring, for 2 mins or until leek softens. Add flour and cook, stirring, for 1 min or until vegetables are well coated.
- Return the chicken to the pan with the cream. Cook, covered, for 3 mins or until the sauce thickens slightly. Stir in the spinach and chives. Season to taste.

Source: [Taste.com](https://www.taste.com.au)





A Parent's Guide to Supporting Their Child's Mental Health at School

As the school year gets into full swing, parents may find themselves navigating a range of emotions alongside their children. From excitement and engagement to anxiety and uncertainty, parents need to prioritise their children's mental health during this period. By fostering open communication, addressing anxieties and concerns, and promoting a nurturing environment, parents can play a vital role in nurturing their child's mental health throughout the school year.

School can evoke various emotions in both children and parents. Parents may experience a mixture of pride, worry, and a sense of letting go as their child finds their feet in a new academic year. It's important to recognise and acknowledge these emotions, as they can influence the parent-child dynamic and impact the child's mental well-being.

Prioritising Mental Health

Here are key strategies for parents to prioritise their child's mental health during the school year:

Open Communication

Establishing open and non-judgmental communication with your child is crucial. Encourage them to express their thoughts, concerns, and fears about school. Actively listen, validate their emotions, and offer support. This creates a safe space for them to share their experiences and promotes a sense of emotional well-being.

Addressing Anxieties and Concerns

Help your child identify and address any anxieties or concerns they may have. Talk about challenges they may face, such as academic pressure or social dynamics, and brainstorm strategies together.



Encourage problem-solving, offer reassurance, and remind them that it's normal to feel nervous about these experiences.

Establishing Routines and Boundaries

Consistency and structure provide a sense of security for children. Establish daily routines that include regular sleep patterns, nutritious meals, and dedicated study time. Set boundaries around technology usage and ensure they have a healthy balance between schoolwork, extracurricular activities, and leisure time.

Encouraging Self-Care

Teach your child the importance of self-care and stress management. Encourage activities that promote relaxation, such as reading, hobbies, mindfulness exercises, or engaging in physical activity. Demonstrate the value of self-care by modelling it yourself.

Building Resilience

Help your child develop resilience by teaching them problem-solving skills, positive self-talk, and coping strategies. Encourage them to view challenges as opportunities for growth and emphasise the importance of perseverance. Celebrate their achievements and support them during setbacks, teaching them that setbacks are temporary and can lead to valuable lessons.

Collaboration with Schools and Professionals

Maintain open lines of communication with your child's teachers and school staff. Collaborate with them to address any concerns and ensure your child's specific needs are met.

As parents, supporting your child's mental health during the school year is essential for their overall well-being and academic success. Remember, however, to prioritise self-care as well, as your own well-being directly influences your ability to support your child effectively.

Poem of the Month

It all starts with Self-Care

BY JAYNE MORRIS

If I care for me, then I can care for you.
 If I care for me, then I can teach you how to
 better care for yourself.
 If I care for you, then you can teach others
 how to treat you.
 If you care for you, then you give others
 permission to care for themselves.
 If others care for themselves, then they start
 to care for each other.
 If others care for each other, then they start to
 care for the planet.
 If we all care for ourselves, each other and our
 planet, then we create the kind of change that
 builds a positive future for our children.
 It all starts with self-care.



Self-Care Within Relationships

Balancing Individual and Collective Wellbeing

Relationships can be one of life's greatest sources of joy and fulfilment. They offer us companionship, support, and the opportunity to grow together. However, in the beautiful dance of togetherness, it's easy to forget the importance of maintaining our individual identities. The key to a harmonious and mentally healthy partnership lies in finding the right balance between nurturing our own well-being and fostering a collective one.

The Importance of Individual Identity

In the beautiful journey of a romantic partnership, it's all too easy to lose ourselves in the embrace of the other person. This phenomenon is natural, even expected, as two individuals come together to form a united front. However, while merging into a loving partnership is a significant part of our personal growth, it's equally crucial to preserve our individuality. Our unique interests, passions, and aspirations are the colours that paint the canvas of our lives. When we neglect these aspects of ourselves in the name of love, it can lead to feelings of suffocation and a gradual erosion of our sense of identity.

Imagine a relationship as a delicate ecosystem, with each partner representing a different species within it. Each species plays a unique role and contributes to the overall balance and health of the ecosystem. Similarly, in a relationship, each person brings their individuality, which adds depth and diversity to the partnership.

When we lose sight of our individual identity within a relationship, several challenges can arise:

Loss of Fulfilment: Our personal interests and passions are often sources of deep fulfilment and joy. When we neglect these in favour of the relationship, we can become unfulfilled and emotionally drained.

Resentment and Frustration: Suppressing our individuality can lead to simmering resentment and frustration over time. We might begin to feel as if we're sacrificing too much for the relationship.

Loss of Self-Esteem: Our self-esteem is often closely tied to our achievements and personal growth. Neglecting our individual goals and aspirations can erode our self-esteem, leaving us feeling less confident and capable.



Stifling Growth: Growth and evolution as individuals are fundamental aspects of the human experience. In a healthy partnership, each person's growth is celebrated and supported. When we lose our individuality, we may stifle our personal growth, which can hinder our happiness and the growth of the relationship itself.

So, how do we maintain our individual identity while nurturing a loving partnership?

1. Prioritise "Me time."

Just as you allocate time for your partner and shared activities, set aside dedicated "me time." Use this time to engage in activities you love, whether it's reading, painting, jogging, or simply enjoying solitude. It's not selfish; it's self-nurturing.

2. Open Communication

Share your need for personal space and time with your partner openly and honestly. Healthy relationships are built on trust and understanding. Explain that taking time for yourself isn't a reflection of your love for them but a way to recharge and come back to the relationship as a more whole and contented individual.

3. Pursue Personal Goals

Never put your personal dreams on hold for the sake of a relationship. Encourage your partner to do the same. When both individuals are actively pursuing their aspirations, it can be incredibly enriching for the relationship as a whole.

4. Mindful Self-Care

Engage in self-care practices that support your mental health. This might involve meditation, journaling, or seeking therapy when needed. When you prioritise your mental well-being, you become a better, more emotionally available partner.



5. Celebrate Differences

Recognise that you and your partner are unique individuals with distinct interests and strengths. Celebrate these differences rather than trying to mould each other into a single mould. It's the diversity within a relationship that can make it truly vibrant and exciting.

Preserving your individual identity within a relationship isn't about neglecting your partner or the love you share. It's about nurturing yourself, which, in turn, allows you to bring your best self to the relationship. It's about ensuring that both individuals in the partnership continue to grow and flourish, creating a deeper and more fulfilling bond. So embrace your individuality, for it is the vibrant thread that weaves the tapestry of your shared love story.



Ready for some footgolf?

Get ready for a day filled with kicks, laughter, and unforgettable moments at the CORE Ireland Footgolf Fundraiser!

Join us for an exciting footgolf outing where we'll aim for perfect shots into giant golf holes. Whether you're a seasoned pro or new to the game, it's all about the thrill of kicking and aiming for victory. Grab your friends and mark the date – it's going to be a ball-tastic day!

This day of laughter and fun will be held at the Navan Adventure Centre in support of mental health recovery education.

On the day, you can expect to find a small coffee shop located inside the centre, along with food trucks. There will also be a raffle for a chance to win one of our several spot prizes.

Head on over to coreireland.ie to secure your spot today!

Thank you to our sponsors!

The CORE Ireland monthly newsletter is an important resource for anyone interested in mental health and well-being. It provides valuable information and practical advice to help people maintain good mental health and improve overall well-being. Thanks to the support of our incredible sponsors, we are able to continue producing this valuable resource for the benefit of our readers.



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