

Counseling Services

Spring 2012

Meet the Staff



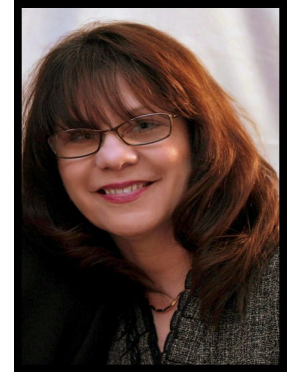
Kristin Larsen
Director & Therapist



James Muller
Therapist



Ruth Ransom
Intern



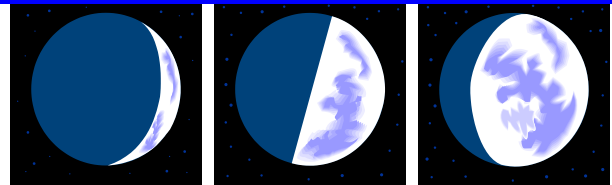
Deborah Pietrangelo
Administrative Assistant

Counseling Services: A Resource for Students

We provide a variety of time-limited services to both undergraduate and graduate students. Services include: short-term psychotherapy, group therapy, outreach/education, resources and referrals, and consultation.

Counseling Services is also an important resource for faculty and staff. We provide training opportunities and links to on-line resources, and we invite faculty and staff to call for consultation or with questions or concerns. We enjoy hearing from faculty and staff and consider this communication vital to the work we do.

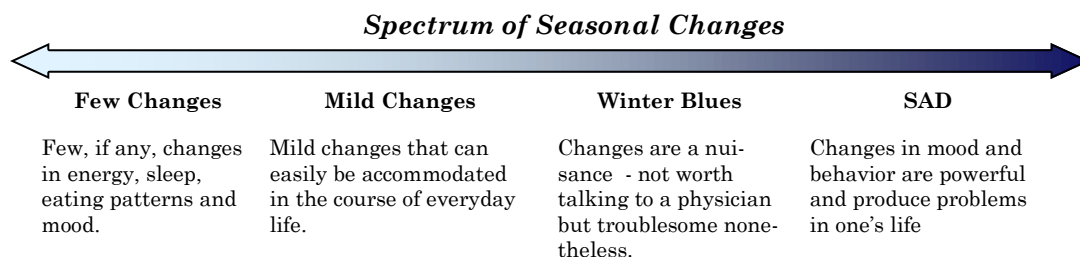
The Spectrum of Seasonal Changes



The great majority of the population experiences some seasonal changes in feelings of well-being and behaviors. Changes can include decreased energy, carbohydrate cravings, decreased sex drive, decreased concentration, feelings of sadness, increased irritability, negative outlook, and sleeping more but feeling less rested.

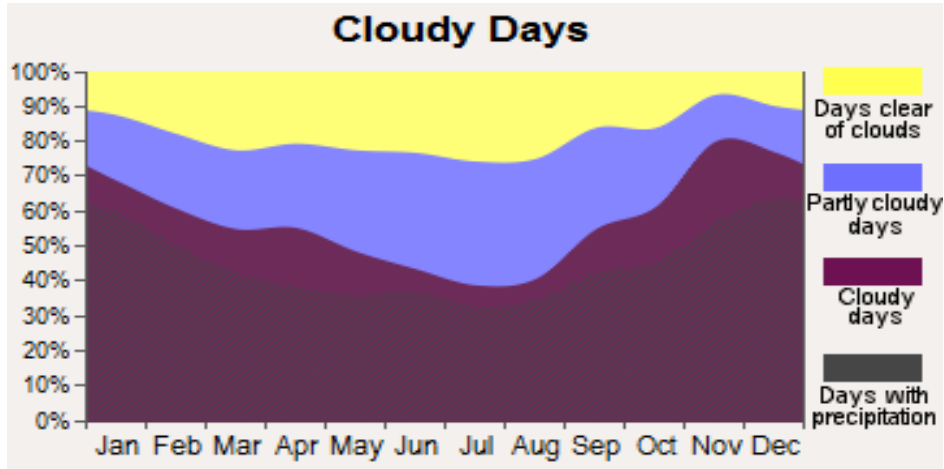
It is helpful to consider these changes as occurring along a spectrum. For some people, changes are minor and may largely go unnoticed. For others, the changes they experience are profound and produce significant problems in their lives. Those who experience significant distress when the seasons shift may be experiencing Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).

SAD refers to a pattern of depression linked with seasonal changes. For most people with SAD, their symptoms typically begin in the fall or winter and end in the spring.



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Special Topic: Seasonal Affective Disorder



<http://www.city-data.com/city/Sault-Ste.-Marie-Michigan.html>

What Causes SAD?

Inherent vulnerability

*women in their 20's to 40's are most vulnerable (perhaps due to cyclical secretions of estrogen and progesterone; after menopause the tendency to experience seasonal changes has been found to be no greater in women than in men)

*Runs in families (genetic link to the neurotransmitter serotonin)

Environment, specifically light deprivation

*Those who live farther from the equator are more likely to develop SAD

*Cloudy weather patterns

*A change in latitude can trigger winter depressions that may not previously have been a problem

*Move from a brighter to a darker home (e.g., a basement apartment or a heavily wooded area)

*Time spent indoors in windowless rooms

Stress

Most people experience some deficits in functioning during the winter (such as mild drops in energy and concentration) and added high stress can trigger feelings of overwhelm and depression.

The Biology of SAD

Melatonin, a hormone secreted by the pineal gland in the brain, helps maintain the body's circadian rhythm (circadian rhythms are physical, mental and behavioral changes that follow a 24-hour cycle). Melatonin has been called the hormone of darkness because it is secreted almost exclusively during the night, however being exposed to too little light during the day can disrupt the body's normal melatonin cycles.

Levels of serotonin, a neurotransmitter in the brain, have been found to decrease in the winter—in fact, studies have shown that the amount of serotonin in the blood coming from the brain varies directly with the amount of sunlight on any particular day.

College Freshmen:

A Population at Risk

“First, the move to college often involves a change of latitude or climate, which may enhance the tendency toward SAD. Second, when at home, a young person is often awakened and bundled off to school by parents. This makes it less likely that classes will be missed and ensures exposure to natural early morning light. This support does not carry through to college, where the student, left to his or her own devices, may lie for hours in a dark dorm room and miss both classes and sunlight. Finally, the newly experienced

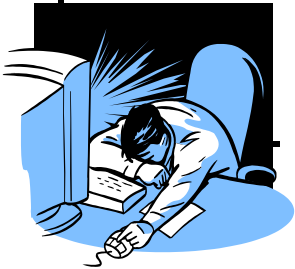
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College Freshmen: A Population at Risk (Continued)

demands of college often pose a much more stressful challenge to the freshman than the familiar routine of high school. While these stressors may be relatively easy to handle in fall and spring, they may prove too burdensome in winter, when the vulnerable student becomes less resourceful and resilient, and they may bring on or aggravate the symptoms of SAD”

Excerpt from Winter Blues, Revised Edition: Everything You Need to Know to Beat Seasonal Affective Disorder by



Treatment for SAD?



*Most people with SAD can benefit from Light Box Therapy (a light therapy box gives off a bright light that mimics natural outdoor light). **LSSU has a light box students are able to use FREE of charge.**

*Increasing environmental light (install more lights, white or bright colored walls, light carpet, clean windows)

*Spend time outdoors—especially when it’s sunny

*Take a winter vacation in a sunny climate

*Regular aerobic exercise

*Decrease carbohydrates and increase fiber

*Identify ways to reduce and/or manage stress

*Consult with a medical or mental health professional for additional treatment options.

FAQ’s About Light Box Therapy

Should I involve a professional, or can I treat my symptoms on my own? Ideally, anyone who undertakes light treatment for SAD should be supervised by a physician or other qualified therapist.

How long does it take for light therapy to begin to work? Although it varies from person to person, most feel the effects of light therapy within two to four days of starting treatment,

What effects might I hope for after starting light therapy? Ideally, the symptoms of SAD disappear. People typically feel more energetic, their overwhelming need to sleep subsides, and they experience fewer craving for sweets and starches.

What is the best time of day to receive light therapy? For most people light treatments are most effective if administered early in the morning.

How does light therapy work? Evidence suggests that light therapy acts on the brain via connections from the eyes. That is why it is necessary to face the light box.

Is light therapy harmful to the eyes? No problems of this type have arisen over the last 25 years when light therapy has been used as recommended.

Will it help to go to a tanning salon? Although research shows that light therapy fixtures work via the eyes and not the skin, some people have reported immediate mood improvement following visits to tanning salons. Although UV light on the skin may improve mood, it is not recommended because of the known potential for these rays to cause skin cancers.

Is it possible to combine light therapy with antidepressant medication? It is commonplace to use these different types of treatment together and can sometimes allow for lower doses of antidepressants to be used.