

Safety Scene: Depression in the Workplace

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Winter's SAD Song: Understanding Seasonal Affective Disorder

Feeling a little "blue" in the winter months, especially in the northern regions where winter is longer and often more unrelenting, is not uncommon. We yearn to be outside, miss our frequent backyard barbeques and generally long for more sunshine and less sloppy precipitation. Some people, however, feel a more serious version of the "winter blues" that is actually a type of depression called Seasonal Affective Disorder, or SAD. More than cabin fever, people affected by SAD may feel sad, grumpy, moody, or anxious, lose interest in usual activities, eat more and crave carbohydrates, gain weight and sleep more than usual while still feeling drowsy during the daytime.

Although no one is positive what causes SAD, there is a good amount of scientific evidence that points to the cause being lack of sunlight. From late September or so, through April or May, many areas of the world experience shorter days and longer nights. If you find yourself experiencing symptoms of depression throughout these winter months, but start feeling better as the seasons change in the spring and summer, you may be affected by SAD.

Fortunately, like many types of depression, SAD can be treated to help relieve the symptoms. Some of the most common treatments include light therapy, prescription drugs and/or counseling. Many doctors also recommend getting regular exercise to help increase your general energy level.