

Don't let the cold weather make you S.A.D!

Winter 2018



West Chester Area School District

Counselor's Corner

Is your child struggling to get moving on these cold, dark, mornings?

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a subtype of depression that follows a seasonal pattern. The most common form of SAD occurs in the winter. When most people think of SAD, they think of adults and teens; however, children can experience this as well. Many people experience these feelings due to the cold weather, along with shorter days, and dark mornings. Some common signs and symptoms of children who are experiencing SAD are irregular sleeping/eating patterns, socially withdrawn or isolated, lack of energy/interest, decrease in grades, low self-esteem, and feelings of hopelessness.

There is no known cause of SAD, but many researchers believe it has to do with a disruption in a person's circadian rhythm—the natural body cycle of waking and sleeping. As days become shorter, and a decrease of light throws off the body's natural clock. In the winter, our bodies produce more melatonin which produces sleep, and less serotonin, which fights depression. If you are noticing these symptoms in your child, here are a few

ways to help!

- Have regular meal/bed times'
- Plan low-key quality time together (playing a board game, reading a book)
- Be active and get outside!
- Eat healthy meals/snacks
- Assist with homework

(Information provided by the American Academy of Pediatrics)

Don't be afraid to reach out for further help and guidance! There are many ways to help get through the winter blues, don't let the icy weather keep you SAD!

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Food for Thought

With winter and spring sports in full swing, it is hard to spend true quality time with your family!

Having dinner together is a great way to stay happy and healthy, make good choices, and connect with one another. (Without a computer screen!)

The Family Dinner Project is a non-profit organization that operates through

Harvard University. After many years of research, the team found that family dinners are beneficial for the mind, body, and overall well-being.

The Family Dinner Project website features a number of different tools and

resources to help make family dinners easy and fun. They provide blogs, recipes, dinner games, conversation starters, real family stories, community connections, newsletters, and more! Family dinners can also increase a child's self-esteem, boost vocabulary skills, de-

crease issues with eating, and build resilience.

Here are some examples of games to play at your dinner table!

1. ABC's of gratitude

-Go around the table and have everyone say something they are grateful for, BUT you must go in alphabetical order! (ex. First person says something that begins with a..)

2. Family game night

-Make appetizers and finger foods for dinner, and bring out your favorite board/card games. Have a mini game night, follow it with a family movie!

3. Homemade headbands

-Write down a couple names of things, people, or places on index cards.. Go around the table and choose a card to hold at your forehead. Ask yes or no questions to try and guess what card is on your head! No peeking!

Check out The Family Dinner Project online for more resources!

