

## THE WINTER BLUES GOT YOU DOWN? Seasonal Affective Disorders aka SAD

### What is SAD?

- Also known as winter blues or winter depression.
- Mood disorder in which people who usually have good mental health experience depressive symptoms during a certain time of the year, commonly the winter.
- In some areas of the country, nearly 1 in 10 people is affected.
- Symptoms can be severe, but they usually clear up. It is important to see a doctor if symptoms persist.
- Seasonal mood variations believed to be related to light, disruptions of your body's natural circadian rhythm, and changes in serotonin and melatonin levels in the body.

### Symptoms:

- Difficulty waking up in the morning.
- Over sleeping and/or over eating, including cravings for carbohydrates leading to potential weight gain.
- Lack of concentration, often leading to declining academic work.
- Lack of energy, especially in the afternoons.
- Withdrawal from friends, family, and social activities.
- Anxiety
- Slow, lethargic movement.
- All the symptoms combine to create the feelings of depression, or pessimism and despair. Hopelessness.
- Sometimes a person may not feel depressed, but lack the energy to complete everyday tasks.

### How to treat SAD:

- No one knows how to prevent SAD, but if symptoms are managed effectively, more serious depression, mood swings, and loss of energy may be avoided later.
- Spend time or exercise outside on sunny days; nature's own light-therapy.
- If symptoms are bad enough, antidepressants may be prescribed.
- Maintain a regular schedule of sleeping, making sure to get enough sleep to feel rested but avoiding oversleeping.
- Exercise regularly.
- Socialize with friends you enjoy being around.
- Avoid excessive drinking as this will only make depression worse.

### Resources at W&L

- **Light-therapy.** The W&L library has several specially designed lights available. There are 7 desk lamps in Leyburn Library which can be moved around and 2 floor lamps in the quiet study room (room 321), 2 desk lamps in Telford Science Library, and 2 desk lamps in the Law Library.
- W&L students may schedule an appointment with a counselor in the University Counseling Center (540-458-8590) or with a physician in the Student Health Center (540-458-8401) to talk about their symptoms.