

THE NEST

A CCS Resource for Discipleship in the Home

We All Have Bad Days: Recognizing Seasonal Depression

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We all have our ups and downs. Just like the weather can change from sunny to stormy, our moods can swing from happy to sad. However, if you find these mood swings are persistent and follow a seasonal pattern, you might be experiencing something more than just the typical bad day.

Understanding the "Seasonal Blues" can be quite simple. Sometimes, when the seasons change, especially in winter, some people feel sad for a long time. It's more than just having one bad day; it's like having many bad days because of the cold and dark weather. When someone has the "Seasonal Blues," they might feel sad, not want to play with friends, want to sleep all the time, forget things easily, or find schoolwork harder than usual. They might also not feel like eating, or they might eat too much.

Why does this happen? One reason is that there's less sunlight in winter. Also, our body has "feel-good" and "sleepy" chemicals, and sometimes they get mixed up when there's less sunshine.

For kids who feel this way, it's essential to speak up. Tell an adult, like your teacher or your mom and dad.

[Here are four practical strategies parents can implement at home to support their children's mental well-being:](#)

1) Open Communication Channels:

Create a safe environment where kids and teens feel comfortable discussing their feelings, concerns, and experiences without fear of judgment. Regularly check in with them, not just when you think there's an issue. Engage in active listening, where you give your full attention and refrain from interrupting or immediately offering solutions. Sometimes, they might just need to be heard.

Open communication helps children and teens process feelings and know they're not alone. It also allows parents to spot potential issues early, provide guidance, or seek professional help.



Key Thoughts:

It's essential to speak up - keep open lines of communication.

Every child is unique. What works best varies from one child to another.

Are there non-medical options I can take?

YES!

Explore the options in this article and talk to a professional to help tailor strategies for your child.

2) Establish Routines and Boundaries:

Develop a consistent daily routine encompassing regular mealtimes, a fixed bedtime, and periods for study and relaxation. While routines offer stability, they also ensure there's flexibility for leisure and spontaneous activities. Routines offer predictability and structure, which can provide a sense of security.

3) Encourage Physical Activity and Creative Outlets:

Promote regular physical activities like walking, cycling, or playing sports. Simultaneously, allow space for creative expression through art, music, writing, or other hobbies.

Physical activity releases endorphins, natural mood boosters, and helps manage stress. Creative outlets offer ways to express emotions, fostering self-awareness and emotional regulation.

4) Limit Screen Time and Promote Real-life Interactions:

Set boundaries on the use of electronic devices. Encourage breaks from screens and prioritize face-to-face interactions. Excessive screen time can contribute to feelings of isolation, sleep disturbances, and anxiety. Real-life interactions enhance social skills, build a support system, and promote a sense of belonging.

I am nervous about medications for something seasonal. What are other steps I can take as a parent?

Being cautious about medications is understandable, especially if the concerns are seasonal. Here are some non-medical steps parents can take to support their children during times when they may be experiencing seasonal sadness or discomfort:

Stay Active and Encourage Outdoor Time: Encourage physical activity, as it can release "feel-good" chemicals in the brain. This could be indoor activities like dancing or outdoor activities like walking, biking, or playing in the park, even in cooler weather.

Promote a Healthy Diet: Eating balanced meals with plenty of fruits and vegetables can boost mood and energy. Omega-3 fatty acids, found in fish and flaxseed, and vitamin D can also help improve mood.

Engage in Fun Activities: Do things that your child enjoys. This could be arts and crafts, reading together, baking, or playing board games. Engaging in enjoyable activities can be a good distraction and mood booster.

Stay Connected and Talk About It: Encourage your child to stay in touch with friends and loved ones, even if it's just through a short call or video chat. Encourage your child to express their feelings. Sometimes, just talking can help. You might also consider seeking counseling or therapy as a supportive space for them to discuss their feelings.

Remember, every child is unique, and what works best can vary from one individual to another. It's essential to communicate with your child and be understanding of their feelings, offering support and comfort as needed. Ultimately, the bond you share with your child is paramount. Being there for them, providing a listening ear, and offering gentle guidance can go a long way in helping them navigate seasonal challenges.

Seek Professional Guidance If Needed

Recognizing when you might need additional support is essential. If your child's mood doesn't improve or worsens significantly, seeking guidance from a counselor or therapist specializing in children's emotional health might be a good idea. They can provide more tailored strategies and tools to support your child.