

Family Counseling Services: Spring Can Bring Showers of Depression

Q: I've been struggling with depression for quite some time, but in recent weeks, it's gotten worse. I'm not sure why, exactly – but it doesn't make a whole lot of sense. Shouldn't this be happening around the holidays? I was better then. What can I do?

Sincerely,
Springtime Blues

Dear Springtime Blues,

Yes, it seems contradictory that you would feel more depressed in the spring than the holiday season. However, several studies provide answers for the strange phenomenon. A few reasons include issues related to allergies, increased light exposure, increased social activity, and lack of structure and family support.

Studies suggest a correlation between allergies and an increased risk of depression – specifically, an increase in high pollen counts and scores rating levels of depression. In one study, researchers theorized that inflammation due to higher pollen counts may be to blame. In fact, one noted researcher labeled the increase in spring depression rates as “summertime depression,” or a form of seasonal affective disorder. Though exact causes were unknown, possi-

ble theories include hormonal changes, or changes in melatonin levels.

Social factors may also increase springtime depression. Seeing other people posting fun photos or status updates on social media sites might be a painful reminder to you of a lack of fun in your life. On a recent episode of the *Harry* show, a dating expert said springtime is prime dating and coupling season. If you're not dating, it could increase depressive feelings to see others doing so. Lack of socializing due to financial difficulties, less structure due to vacations, and lack of family support were also noted as possible causes.

No matter what issues are causing your increase in depression this spring, you are not alone. Increased depression and suicide rates in the spring have been validated in multiple studies. Data reported debunked the “so-called myth” that depression rates are highest during the holidays.

If you're feeling depressed, pay attention to possible warning signs: changes in appetite, sleep, energy levels, interest in enjoyable activities, ability to concentrate, and especially feelings of hopeless-



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ness and/or worthlessness. If these symptoms occur continuously for two or more weeks, it is a sign of clinical depression – and you should seek a professional evaluation. Some ways of reducing your depression are to schedule time with family and friends, go for a walk (even just 10 minutes can help), and journaling.

All our counselors at Family Counseling Service are caring, competent, and able to provide help and

hope. Please do not delay getting help, causing yourself to suffer any longer. You are not alone. We are here.

Love and Peace,
April L. Stevens