

## SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER CAN IMPACT PEOPLE IN RECOVERY.

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a temporary period of depression during certain times of the year. Many people face SAD in late fall and winter due to fewer daylight hours, inclement weather, and freezing temperatures. The disorder generally subsides when spring begins.

### Symptoms of Seasonal Affective Disorder.

Seasonal Affective Disorder is characterized as a recurrent condition, with symptoms lasting up to four to five months. These symptoms can persist all day, every day, for at least two consecutive weeks. They include:

- Feelings of sadness and hopelessness
- Increased anxiety
- Irritability and restlessness
- Excessive sleep
- Changes in appetite
- Weight gain
- Thoughts of suicide
- Feelings of guilt, shame, and self-blame
- Reduced self-esteem

If a person is in recovery, SAD can increase the risk of return to use due to a loss of interest in recovery goals that once meant a great deal to the individual.

### Helping a loved one who is experiencing SAD.

First and foremost, encourage your loved one to get professional help, which may be difficult if the individual is simply not ready to make a change.

Family members can create a supportive environment by being non-judgmental, empathetic, and understanding. It can also be helpful to validate a loved one's feelings and encourage them to embrace activities that they love and can bring them joy.

Here are some other suggestions to consider. Keep a consistent daily schedule and encourage your loved one to do the same. Set realistic and achievable goals to help your loved one regain their sense of accomplishment. Promote self-efficacy by empowering them to make decisions, solve problems, and achieve progress toward their goals and recovery.

Although it may be difficult at times, it is so important to have patience with the progress your loved one is making, especially while dealing with SAD.

### Watching a loved one struggle is hard.

It can be particularly difficult when you can see the path forward for someone, but they refuse to accept your help.

If your loved one is living with you and is neglecting personal hygiene, sleeping a lot of the time, refusing to help around the house, and ignoring boundaries, what should you do? It may help to sit down together when you are both clear-headed and create a list of "non-negotiables." Be forthcoming about the behaviors that you would hope to see. The difficult part of substance use disorder – and any process that involves change – is that we cannot force our loved ones to make certain decisions.

We only have control over our own behavior. We can make our own wellness plan with the help of a Family Recovery Coach, learn to prioritize our self-care, and begin to let go of the things that we cannot control. Change is difficult and scary but working on yourself only makes you more capable of handling difficult situations when they arise. By participating in your wellness, you also model to your loved one how good it feels to be fully present and to feel fulfilled in life.

As always, if you are interested in learning more about McCall's Family Recovery program, do not hesitate to reach out to me.



**McCall's Family Recovery Coach Program is grant funded and provided at no-cost to all participants.**

For more information contact:

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Family Recovery Coach

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## Resources

### McCall Behavioral Health Network

860.496.2100  
mccallbhn.org

### McCall's Recovering Together Group

Meets every Wednesday,  
5:30PM via Zoom.  
For more info, email:  
leann.mitchell@mccallbhn.org

### NAMI CT, Waterbury

Paul Brainerd  
860.882.8674 or 860.310.4055  
pbrainerd@namict.org

### Sound Community Services

New London  
Amy Faenza  
860.439.6443  
amy.faenza@soundct.org

### Clifford Beers Clinic

New Haven  
Christine Montgomery  
203.915.4074  
cmontgomery@cliffordbeers.org

### Community Renewal Team

Hartford and Middletown  
Casie DeRosier  
860.549.3350  
derosierc@crtct.org

### TriCircle, Hope and Support Groups

Hope After Loss Groups  
Ana Gopoiian  
860.349.7074  
ana@tricycle.or