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Tips for avoiding the winter blahs, blues, or SAD

Pay attention to your moods and energy levels. If you realize that your spirits begin to sink at the end of the summer, take preemptive action. A good offense is better than after-the-fact defense;

1. Plan active events for yourself in advance of the fall.
 2. Expose yourself to as much bright light as you can. If it is a sunny day, go outside as much as you can. If it is gray and overcast, use as much light indoors as you can. Stay physically active, and begin your physical activity before the blahs get you.
 3. Try to establish a mental set that will help you to enjoy the wintertime. It is going to happen, so gear yourself to get pleasure out of it.
- By all means, if you feel yourself sinking and realize you are losing control, don't feel ashamed or try to hide it. You are in good company. Many people feel this way. Seek competent professional help. What you learn from this season is something you can probably do for yourself in all the falls and winters to come.

Bright light therapy

1. Bright light therapy is the most established treatment for SAD
2. Bright light therapy consists of looking at special broad spectrum bright lights from 1/2 to three hours a day, generally in the early morning hours. One should not stare directly into the lights because of possible eye damage.
3. A substantial amount of light is needed, which means the distance from the lights to your eyes needs to be monitored---close enough to give you the best amount of light, but distant enough so you don't hurt your eyes.
4. The timing and length of the exposure per day are highly individual.

Bright light therapy is unlikely to help in certain situations because depressed mood is not always related to the decreasing number of daylight hours. Other possibilities are that you may have an ongoing depression, unlikely to be helped by bright light therapy. Your increasing irritability may be due to your spending more hours in the house cooped up, isolated from friends and neighbors. Or it might be due to keeping your dogs or cats in the house more than you do in the summertime and spring. If you are allergic to cats and dogs, doing this will produce allergy symptoms, which can produce poor sleep, which in turn can produce the impression of SAD--but such a mood change then will definitely not respond to bright light therapy. There are many other sources of depressed mood unrelated to light exposure.

If a few days of a light trial don't make a difference in your depression, seek a different kind of help