

## Birch Hill Happenings Aromatherapy, LLC

Presents

### Mild Winter Depression, Cabin Fever and S.A.D.

by Penny Keay

It is not unusual for folks to feel sad or have the blues for a day or two. Just about everyone does especially during or after the holidays. Especially if you think of the past where people and relatives that used to be with us are now gone. Times change, people change and sometimes it makes us sad to remember the past. But that is not what this article is about. The sadness here is caused by the changing of the seasons.

Everyone in the northern hemisphere is experiencing shorter hours of natural daylight. With this comes one of the fairly common health concerns known as S.A.D. or Seasonal Affective Disorder. This is more noticeable in the northern half of the USA and Canada beginning in late October and into February.

SAD is caused when not enough sunlight travels via the eye's optic nerve so that it cannot stimulate the hypothalamus. The hypothalamus helps the brain to regulate our moods, helps sleep and hunger patterns. When we are deprived of our sunlight we can have less energy, fatigue, a hard time concentrating, become sleepy easily and become depressed. Some folks will crave sweets that will give you a short term 'high' that then can lead into mild depressive states.

What essential oils can help S.A.D.? Several oils known to stimulate the hypothalamus include: **Frankincense**, **Bergamot**, **Geranium** and any of the **Citrus** oils. Try to get outdoors especially during daylight hours will help the chemical reactions needed to stimulate the hypothalamus.

Although the specific cause may not be actually known, it is known that not getting enough sunlight at the correct time of the day will affect everything in your life. This includes both your physical and mental states because of the disruption in your normal or natural circadian rhythm (your daily internal clock).

Not everyone will have a problem with the seasonal changes. Many factors can play into why some folks suffer and others never do. Remember everyone has a different genetic makeup and different life stories.

Your age will also play a role. And of course your own body chemistry will all contribute to how you are affected by the changing of the seasons. Are you getting enough sunlight to make Vitamin D and other hormones and chemicals you need?

Please know that just because you live in an area of the country where you have plenty of sunshine you can still suffer from S.A.D. And for you it may not be during the winter months. If you live in a hot or extremely warm climate you may experience this in the hot summer months. Why? Too often you will become a 'cave' dweller in your own home. You don't go outdoors because of the heat or pollution. You never really see the sun.

Al has seen this phenomenon while visiting relatives in Arizona. Everyone stays inside during the day with their drapes and curtains shut. They go outside in the evenings when it is cooler. Some NEVER see the sunshine except when they have to go out to work or run errands. Then they wonder why they can't sleep at night, but doze or sleep all day. They have their days and nights mixed up because they see the sun in the evening hours. (There is more about this problem later in this article.)

You may be suffering from a form of depression caused by Seasonal Affective Disorder - If you have unexplained lethargy, fatigue and your sleep patterns have been disrupted or changed. Are you awake late into the night and then fall asleep just before your alarm goes off? Have your eating habits changed? You eat more so gain weight, or you eat less and so have no energy.

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You feel depressed and sad or just don't feel right. You may feel anxiety and loss of energy and want to hide from everyone and all activities. You can't concentrate and you just don't enjoy doing the things you used to do. Stress can also be a big factor in S.A.D.

We have had several consultations where folks from the south and the desert southwestern part of the USA experience poor sleeping and sleep habits, feel depressed, anxious and very fatigued and frustrated. They are suffering from S.A.D. also, just that it is a little different than what we experience here in the northern parts. Of course we do many consultations about depression and sleep problems. And we get them from the northern half of the USA but folks up north seem to realize that S.A.D. is more common here and know what is happening.

So what can you do? First if you are not sure that you are affected by S.A.D. and you are feeling depressed for more than a day or two and it just doesn't seem to be getting better, you should seek counsel from a medical professional.

Some folks already know they are being affected seasonally, others may not be sure. So check first to make sure there isn't some underlying health problem whether it is physical or mental that needs to be addressed first.

If you prefer not to use medications, should you be offered, (which most folks using essential oils prefer not to use prescription drug) please let your health care provider know you would like to try an alternative and complimentary approach first or in conjunction with their prescribed treatment.

You can try a few of the following if you KNOW you have S.A.D. All of these can be used now, but in the future you may want to use them as preventative measures so you don't have to feel sad. (Please note that if you are diagnosed with depression the suggestion made below may help you too but use with the guidance of your health care provider.)

First thing in the morning open up your curtains or better yet go outside for 15-30 minutes without your glasses or sunglasses on. You are not going to be looking into the sun, just getting some nice bright light. Try to make your home as bright and light as possible the rest of the day, letting in natural light as much as you can.

This is very important. Try to get the first natural light within the first hour or so of your awakening. This triggers a natural production of melatonin to be released about 14-18 hours later. This helps you to fall asleep and so you can get a good night's sleep. Not getting good sleep will make you tired, grumpy, miserable and depressed.

If getting some 'sun' is not possible (because the sun isn't up yet) when you first get up try to get it within the first hour or two that the sun is shining. Even if it is a cloudy day – go outside and let in some natural light. This can make a difference.

Avoid the sun late in the day as it will trigger the melatonin too late and you may not be able to fall asleep until the wee hours of the morning.

The natural sunshine will also help raise your levels of Serotonin, another hormone your body needs to help you feel happy. Using natural sunshine, sunlight and natural light is a good starting point to resetting your Circadian Rhythm.

Your Circadian Rhythm can easily get disrupted due to less daylight hours and the daylight saving clock changes that occur around the world.

What essential oils might help you with this disorder? First you need to have energy throughout the day, so you can be ready to go to bed later on and fall asleep. Re-establishing good sleep habits will be of utmost importance to help you combat S.A.D.

When you get up in the morning, not only do the Sunshine thing, but smell light and refreshing energizing essential oils. Essential oils that are your favorite, ones you know make you feel happy or good.

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Sunny days of course will be better than cloudy, but any natural light will help. Any essential oil that makes you feel good or happy are always the best oils to choose during the winter months if you suffer from S.A.D. Normally citrus and floral scents will make people feel happier, but as I said, any oil you enjoy and especially crave the scent, may be the oil you need to help you the most during this time.

There are specially made natural light bulbs that are very helpful for severe cases. These would be a benefit. These bulbs are not inexpensive, but for those of us looking for natural cures, the price for a few bulbs is worth the extra cost.

Any light scented oils such as a citrus like **Orange** , **Lemon** and **lime** may get you going. Some folks will prefer the mints, **Peppermint** and **Spearmint** as they are energizers too.

Here are a couple blends to help stimulate the brain and to help with depression

**Bergamot** - 9 drops

**Geranium** - 11 drops

**Ginger** 10 drops

or

**Geranium** - 15 drops

**Lavender** - 5 drops

**Bergamot** - 10 drops

Blend and use in diffuser, or add several drops to bath or shower.

If your concentrating for tasks at hand are wreaking havoc with your mind, try a blend of **Basil**, **Lemon** and **Rosemary**(our **Concentration blend**) to help you stay focused and mentally aware. Using a **Terra Cotta Disc** with essential oils added then placed on your shower floor where the water can splash against it is a great way to start your day with refreshing and invigorating scents.

You may need to use other energizing essential oils in the afternoon, especially after lunch. This is a very common time of the day for folks to become sleepy but if you are having problems sleeping at night we don't want you to take a nap now.

Get up, walk around and get excited about something! If it's after 3:30 don't drink any more beverages with caffeine in them. Even de-caffeinated beverages often times have a little caffeine in them so drink plain water or herbal teas.

Now what to do when it is time to get ready for bed. About an hour before bedtime begin to diffuse one of these essential oils in the bedroom **Lavender**, **Bergamot**, **Ylang-Ylang**, **Mandarin**, **Neroli** or **Roman Chamomile**.

These are very soothing and relaxing oils that we often suggest. Using one or more of these oils for folks having problems falling asleep will normally reset their sleep patterns. Only diffuse for the hour before you are going to enter the room for the night, then stop diffusing. There will be plenty of essential oil molecules in the air for you to drift off to sleep.

Be sure to set up a new bedtime routine and try to stick to it. A relaxing bath or at minimum a foot bath, can start off your bedtime routine. Adding Epsom salts to your bath, a rich source of magnesium known to help relax muscles and soreness, is encouraged. You can add a few drops of a relaxing essential oil to the tub too, if desired.

Reading a book for 15 minutes prior to sleep can help too. Try to avoid the watching the news especially if that is upsetting to you and be careful what other programs you might be watching. Oh and shut off the television in your bedroom. Bedrooms are for sleeping and sex. Not for watching television! Watch it out in another room.

One other thing and it may be contrary to what you have been taught but about 30 minutes before heading off to bed eat 1/2oz of natural cheese (not processed)(measure the cheese!!) and half of a small apple. No more, no less. Drink some

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water or brush your teeth as usual before heading to bed. I don't understand the exact process this little bite of food does nor why this combination works, but I do know it will help you to fall asleep and stay asleep.

Okay, now that you are sleeping better and you are getting the rest you need, you are getting some extra sunshine, exercising, eating better, using a few of your favorite essential oils you will soon be feeling better and soon the SAD feeling and its associated problems will never appear again, right? Well, it can change next season. So practice these suggestions year round.

Just remember to follow the above suggestions and get out and have some fun with family or friends too. All of it is important to help you feel better faster. One added note: be careful about staying out past your normal bedtime as it can once again cause problems with your internal clock and make things worse once again.

Just remember any of the Citrus oils such as **Grapefruit, Orange, Lime** are uplifting as are **Frankincense, Sandalwood Ylang-Ylang, Clary Sage Jasmine, Neroli, and Rose**. The best way is to diffuse them in the air. Although many prefer to have someone give them a massage or to take a bath where you add a few drops of the oils to the water.

Try the single oils first or mix two or three together. We also have **pre blended synergy's such as Beautiful, Celebration, Citrus, Elation, Refreshing, and Revitalizing**. Most of these contain one or more of the above oils. Diffusing them in the air will definitely chase the "S.A.D. & Cabin Fever" blues away!

### **Just one personal thought and theory:**

I truly believe that People are not getting enough sunlight or sunshine in their daily life.

Sun shine and bright daylight are something the Lord has given us for 14-16 hours a daylight for a reason. Without these powerful rays we would not survive - nor will anything else. If we didn't need sun - why does God have it shine for so many hours of the day? Think about it!

Just look at what happens to plants that don't get enough sun. They get weak, sickly and don't do well, they don't thrive.

So, what about us humans? Don't you think we need a lot of good sunlight too?

We all would benefit from more hours a day of sun but too many forget and abuse it you get 'burned' and over exposed. If you would just use common sense - you can reap the wonderful benefits of the sun.

I truly believe that a lot of mental illness (especially depression) and health issues involving muscles, joints, hormones and enzymes that regulate and help every other body function would benefit from daily sunshine treatment.

Unfortunately our society has become too much of inside 'cave' dwellers or living around too much artificial lighting. We have become frightened of something that is so very vital to our health and well-being.

Don't be afraid of the Sun - it is there for our health!!

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Take a bath 5-6 drops of this Blend added to the water

**Lemon** - 6 drops

**Coriander** - 12 drops

**Neroli** - 6 drops

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Ylang-Ylang - 5 drops

Blend in a [glass bottle](#), then add the drops to your bath water.

### UPLIFTING Room Spray for S.A.D.

Lime- 50 drops

Grapefruit 50 drops

Orange - 10 drops

Patchouli - 10 drops

Spearmint – 5 drops

Emulsifier - 5 ml

Linen spray or Room spray base- 4 oz

Add essential oils and emulsifier into a clean bottle then add to the Linen and Room Spray into the bottle Shake well then spritz in the air. Shake well before each use. This can be used in any diffuser by omitting the emulsifier and room spray base. Just blend in an amber bottle, shake well and then apply a few drops to your favorite diffuser.

### PEP Me UP!

Orange - 4 drops

Clary Sage - 2 drops

Coriander - 2 drops

Ylang-Ylang – 2 drops

Jasmine - 1 drop

Palmarosa - 1 drop

Vetiver 1 drop

Blend these essential oils in a [glass bottle](#) and use in any [diffuser](#) or [Personal inhaler](#) or aromatherapy [jewelry](#)!

### Make me not so Crabby Blend

Lavender– 15 drops

Cypress– 15 drops

Coriander – 15 drops

Ylang-Ylang – 15 drops

Blend the essential oils in a [glass bottle](#). Diffuse in any fan diffuser . This blend can be used in a bath too to lift your mood. Add 6-8 drops to an average size tub. Don't have a bathtub or prefer showers? Apply 30 drops to a [Terra Cotta Disc](#) and let soak in the terra cotta. Then take this in the shower, set it on the floor where the water from the shower head can hit it. Let the shower stall fill with the scent for a minute or two. Enjoy!

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