



# EXCHANGE

BREAKFAST EXCHANGE CLUB OF BILLINGS, MT

# BEC DECEMBER NEWSLETTER

The Breakfast Exchange Club of Billings

## December—Seasonal Affective Disorder

With winter on the horizon, it's getting darker earlier each day, and temperatures are slipping. Seasonal affective disorder could hit particularly hard this year, especially after months of social distancing and limited contact with family or large groups.

"Our emotional winter is coming," said Jaime Blandino, a clinical psychologist and cofounder of Thrive Center for Psychological Health in Decatur, Georgia.

Seasonal affective disorder, also known by its apt acronym, SAD, is a form of depression that some people get for a few months each year, most commonly during the late fall and winter months, as the days shorten. It can linger until the following spring or summer. Although less common, SAD can also appear in the summer months and go away as the season changes.

"I think we can expect a surge in seasonal affective disorder this year," Blandino said. "It's the pandemic, the election and just the cumulative effect of the year."

### Seasonal affective disorder

Less hours of sunlight during winter can cause a drop in brain chemicals that regulate mood, such as serotonin, often called the "happy molecule" for its ability to contribute to well-being. We also rely on sunlight to help stimulate production of melatonin, which helps us sleep, according to the American Psychological Association.

"Seasonal affective disorder could be worse this year given how much we've relied on the outside as this sort of respite," said Vaile Wright, the APA's senior director of health care innovation.

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### December 2020

*December Quote: "What is Christmas? It is tenderness for the past, courage for the present, hope for the future." — Agnes M. Pahro*

Club

President:

Dina Harmon





**December Volunteer Opportunities:**

**Rest up and enjoy the holiday festivities!**

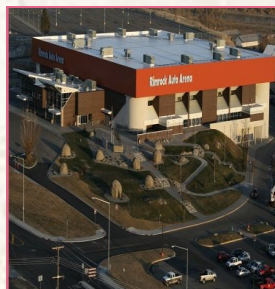
**Future Volunteer Opportunities:**

**Will keep you posted as events come back!**



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Come weekly at 7:00 a.m. on Friday to the Yellowstone Room and get to know your fellow Exchangers!



**8100 BEST CLUB BULLETIN**

Exchange Club  
75 or more members

To receive a SAD diagnosis, individuals need to have episodes of major depression that coincide with a specific seasons for at least two years, according to the National Institute of Mental Health. The condition is more common in women than in men and affects about 5% of the US population.

It occurs more frequently the farther people live from the equator, including for instance, Alaska, which has darker winters. This disorder is also more common among women and young adults, as well as those with a personal or family history of depression.

"There's also a clinically anecdotal risk factor which is just 'how have you been doing?'" Blandino said, noting that the pandemic has affected the emotional state of many who have not usually needed to worry about their mental health. "Some people didn't have depression until now."

During the pandemic, people are already carrying a greater emotional load than usual. Although one of the best ways to prevent Covid-19 remains avoiding gatherings, following public health advice comes at a cost to mental health.

"Some of the measures we've had to take to protect ourselves against the coronavirus aren't good for us," she said. "Our modes of resilience may not be applicable anymore."

The new normal means a decline in in-person interaction. Further, many people feel screen fatigue from using video chat technology to keep in touch with friends and families. These factors can drive a palpable sense of loneliness that leaves many vulnerable to SAD this year.

"Of course, you're anxious," Blandino said. "It would be abnormal for you not to be struggling."

### How to cope

We're a few weeks into fall in the Northern Hemisphere. Before the mercury truly plunges, now is the time to build a plan that can see you through the dark winter months. Think of it as squirreling away your own mental health acorns from which you can benefit later.

"It's easy to get creative when you're not already in that depressed place," Blandino said.

**Build a tool kit:** As you brainstorm an approach to staving off SAD, one way to think ahead is to create an idea bank of your favorite ways to do self-care, be it long morning walks or late-night bubble baths. Physically writing them out is a way of getting away from ever-pervasive screens.

"It can be a literal box," Blandino said. "As you think of ideas, write them on a slip of paper and throw them in the box."

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**Wellness piggy bank:** Spend some time journaling now and reflect on the small pleasures around you. This is a mindfulness practice of really leaning into the sensory aspects of our experience, such as capturing in our mind's eye the beauty of a flower blooming in the backyard, or the aroma of an autumnal-scented candle wafting in the air, Blandino said.

Or it could be listening to the nostalgic sounds of a favorite band's music, which allow us to emotionally reenter a previous era of our lives when things seemed less uncertain. Keep track of these moments, and if things feel bleak this winter, reread your list or add to it with more little joys you see.

**Seeking light:** As you navigate winter, there are small tweaks to your day that can help you get the extra light you need.

"That could be taking your coffee by the window in the morning," Wright said. Put your desk next to a window. Or that could be something simple such as not wearing your sunglasses when outside to fully soak in the sun's healing rays.

**Happy lights:** One of the primary treatments for seasonal affective disorder is bright light therapy, which has been described as clinically effective since the 1980s. You can find one that works for you and your budget by searching online for light therapy lamps, which work by emitting full-spectrum light similar to sunlight.

About 20 to 60 minutes of exposure to 10,000 lux of cool-white, fluorescent light can be associated with a significant improvement in mood, according to a 2009 study by researchers from the University of Maryland.

**Spend a weekend cooking:** When you are up for it, consider cooking a big helping of cozy, hearty soups, packed with nutrition. "Give yourself something to eat for times when you don't feel like doing anything," Blandino said.

**Find something to look forward to:** With fewer special events, conferences and vacations, every day starts to feel like Blursday. That's why it's particularly important to try and still plan something special for Halloween, Thanksgiving and the winter holidays, even if a gathering needs to be small, outdoors or physically distant.

This year that could mean setting up a special space outdoors with a space heater or twinkle lights and inviting over just a few close friends. "Having things to look forward to is important for regulating your mood," Blandino said.

**Find a therapist:** One of the best balms for a weary soul is still professional help, and during the pandemic, telehealth services have become more accessible. Receiving counseling online has been shown to be comparable in efficacy to seeing a therapist in person, according to a 2017 systematic review study.

Before the pandemic began, about 20% of US therapy sessions were being done through telehealth, Wright explained, citing APA data. That number has risen to 75% after governors issued emergency orders expanding access to telehealth services.

The APA is pushing to help make those changes permanent, she added.





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Looking for something to do and support community organizations at the same time?

December 3-5—Festival of Trees

December 11—Ugly Sweater Party @ Hooligans

December 5, 11, 12, 18-24—Zoo Lights

December—Moss Mansion Tree Display Tour (by appointment)

December 13th—Downtown Litter Pickup (Liberty & Vine @ 8:00 am)

1st & 3rd Thursday of month—Yoga @ Billings First Church; w/ Lisa Harmon; 10:00 a.m.

Mondays—Community Monday @ Hooligans (each week benefits different organization)

Tuesdays—Pint night at Last Chance Cider House (each week benefits different organization)

Tuesdays—Bingo Night at 406 Kitchen & Taproom (each week benefits different organization)

Wednesdays—Geeks Who Drink Pub Quiz & Trivia @ Thirsty Street At The Garage; 6:00 p.m.

## **\*\*Special Days/Holidays**

21st—First Day of Winter

24th Christmas Eve

25th—Christmas Day

31st—New Year's Eve



**THE BREAKFAST  
EXCHANGE CLUB OF  
BILLINGS, MT**

PO Box 2224  
Billings, MT

[www.breakfastexchangeclub.org](http://www.breakfastexchangeclub.org)

*Exchange, America's Service Club, is a group of men and women working together to make our communities better places to live through programs of service in Americanism, Community Service, Youth Activities, and its national project, the Prevention of Child Abuse.*

**Committee Happenings:**

**BECON Committee—**

**Meetings canceled**

**through end of year**

**Invocation Com-**

**mittee—Meetings can-**

**celed through end of**

**year**

**Social Committee—**

**working on a fun event!**

**Freedom Shrine —**

**Freedom Shrine rededi-**

**cation at McKinley**

**School moved to school**

**year.**

**GET INVOLVED!**

*\*\*Committee Chairs—  
Please email your up-  
coming events to  
dinahar-  
mon1212@gmail.com to  
be included in next  
months newsletter!\*\**



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## CAP Center Corner

### How To Have An Awesome Christmas When You Have No Money

You long to create a magical Christmas for your family, but you are flat broke. The kids are getting excited about the coming holiday, but you are stressed out just thinking about how to pay for it. I have some great news. You CAN celebrate Christmas with NO money! I

#### FIRST OFF – ADJUST YOUR MINDSET

I know it's really hard to get excited about Christmas when you're stressed about money. But here's the thing – our attitude towards Christmas will make a huge difference. Have you noticed that your kids pick up on your feelings really fast? If you're excited about Christmas then your children will be too.

#### TALK TO FAMILY (AND FRIENDS)

This is the point where you need to have some frank conversations. I'm sure that your spouse/partner is aware of your financial situation. Still you want to make sure that you are both on the same page when it comes to Christmas. Find some time to sit down and talk about your goals and desires for the holiday. Brainstorm ideas. You are going to need their support and help.

Next figure out who in your extended family (or friends) needs to know.

- Perhaps you usually exchange gifts with particular friends or family members?
- Maybe you have traditions that require spending money, such as shopping trips with a friend, or going out for a special evening with another couple?

You don't need to go into detail, but simply let them know that finances are tight and you can't do those things this year. You can probably find free alternatives, so suggest those things.

You also need to talk to your children. I'm not sure that younger kids need to know, as they won't notice the difference. Younger kids don't care about presents, but they will find wonder in the decorations, family traditions, and movies. All those things are free for the taking.

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However you do need to talk with older children and teens. Reassure them that Christmas will still be wonderful, but the focus will not be on gifts. Enlist their help. If you want to ham it up, present them with a challenge.

*"Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to help us find ways to celebrate Christmas, that are completely free."*

The one who finds the most creative ideas can be crowned the queen or king of Christmas.

Older kids/teens can help:

- Come up with fun Christmassy activities that are completely free.
- Create a free Christmas play list on Spotify web player.
- Pick out Christmas books, movies and audio books at the library.
- Find and make simple ornaments.
- Help you make simple gifts

## GIVE YOURSELF PERMISSION TO SKIP SOME THINGS THIS YEAR

We want to celebrate a great Christmas WITHOUT spending any money right? So that might mean giving up the things that cost money and replacing them with free alternatives. Here are some things you can give up without missing out on Christmas magic.

- Buying and mailing Christmas cards
- Stockings
- New decorations
- Commercial Advent Calendars
- Gifts for extended family and friends
- Splurging on masses of Christmas treats
- Expensive gifts

There is nothing wrong with any of these things, but they all take money you don't have right now. If you need to write yourself a permission slip, go right ahead.

## Do Something Christmassy Everyday

To top it off, try and spend time each day doing something Christmassy during the month of December. It might be going to look at Christmas lights, enjoying seasonal crafts, listening Christmas music, watching Christmas movies you own or on TV, or just reading a Christmas book. All of these things are free, but go a long way to creating the magic of Christmas and creating memories.

[rediscoveredfamilies.com](http://rediscoveredfamilies.com)





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## Be A Priority This Holiday Season Without Guilt

During the hustle and bustle of the holiday season, it's all too easy to let self-care slip off your radar. However, it's important for your health that you prioritize your well-being, so you can enjoy the season with family and friends. If you burn yourself out with all the cooking, shopping, traveling and hosting, you'll not only feel a lot less joyful, but you also won't have much left to give during this season of giving. Follow these simple tips to be sure you are carving out time for self-care this holiday season.

### Tip #1: Give Yourself the Gift of the Present

#### **"Be present, put your cellphone down, and turn the TV off."**

There's no need to compare your holiday festivities to others on social media - everyone has different traditions and ways of celebrating. Take the time to unplug from electronic devices and be fully present with your loved ones. Choose special times, especially as you gather for meals, for everyone to shut off their gadgets and just enjoy being together.

### Tip #2: Make time for self-care

#### **"Self care can mean taking care of yourself by saying "NO."**

Whether you decide to conduct an internal check-in, write down your thoughts in a journal or simply close your eyes and relax for a few minutes, taking at least 10 minutes for yourself each day is one essential step to keeping yourself calm, cool and collected during the hectic holidays. Experiment to find what relaxes or calms you the most, whether that's meditation, gentle stretching or sipping herbal tea.

### Tip #3: Live in Gratitude

#### **"Every morning think about 3 or 4 things you are grateful for."**

### Tip #4: Stimulate Your Mind

#### **"Use the time to focus on what's meaningful and stimulate your mind."**

### Tip #5: Honor a Lost Loved One

#### **"The more we talk about them, the more we keep their memory alive."**

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### Tip #6: Make getting a good night's sleep a top priority

#### **"Everything's better when you get enough sleep."**

Your mood, your concentration and your overall health. Try not to overbook yourself, so you can maintain a regular sleep schedule even during the busiest times of the year. Getting to sleep just a half an hour earlier each night can make a difference. Avoid things that you know keep you tense and awake in the evening, like caffeinated beverages or too much screen time.

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Tip #7: Be thoughtful when crafting New Year's resolutions

**"Take the time to think about your own personal goals for the new year."**

Focusing on self-improvement and self-care rather than self-deprivation. Make sure that your resolutions include giving yourself a reward, like a vacation, a mini-break or a special outing that you've earned.

No matter what time of year it is, taking care of yourself is never a waste of time or effort. The more you can relax and recharge, the more you will enjoy each day - and the more you'll have to give to others. Focusing on a few positive changes during your day can make a huge difference when it comes to your physical well-being.

<https://phl17.com/brandpointcontent.com>

