



## Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD): What It Is and How Massage Helps Manage its Effects.

When it is mid-winter and the days are shorter, many feel a mild sort of depression, commonly known as the Winter Blues or clinically Seasonal Affective Disorder.

This happens because the human body needs sunlight for a variety of reasons. Shorter day light hours and in places like western New York, where the sky can seem always covered with clouds, sunlight is in shorter supply.



The body needs sunlight to convert nutrients we take in into Vitamin D; a deficiency in this vitamin is thought to reduce the production of the “happy” body chemicals, like endorphins and dopamine. Hence, many people feel slightly depressed, low energy, and lower motivation. In addition, we spend more time indoors in mid-winter, also limiting our absorption of sunlight.

Research has shown that Massage, especially when received regularly, stimulates the body to produce both endorphins and dopamine. If you are a runner or other kind of Athlete, the “Runner’s High” you feel is the result of increased dopamine in the brain and blood stream. In addition, research has also shown that massage also reduces the production of the stress hormone cortisol. Cortisol triggers the body into the Fight or Flight mode; reducing blood cortisol, as massage does, turns off this response, and supports the body’s Relaxation Response.

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So if you are feeling just little off, or low energy this time of year, it is likely the result of these biochemical processes. **Massage can counter-act the effects of SAD** by reversing some of the chemical processes that create these feelings.