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# PEARL RIVER PARENT CONNECTION

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*A newsletter brought to you by PRSD School Clinicians*

Winter 2021



## Fun Family Holiday Activities

- 👤 **Decorate Holiday Cookies:** Who doesn't love cookies? Set aside a day to dedicate to baking and decorating holiday cookies as a family. This fun holiday activity is sure to be a family favorite.
- 👤 **Create a Holiday Greeting Video:** If you want to stand out this year (and save money!) then consider recording and editing a family holiday video. Email the video out to everyone instead of spending money on Holiday cards this year. Your family and friends love and appreciate the creativity!
- 👤 **Have a Holiday Game Night:** If you'd rather stay in this year, then consider dedicating one night this holiday season as a Holiday Game Night!
- 👤 **Decorate Gingerbread Houses:** as you walk through the store, you're bound to see the gingerbread house kits that are priced a tad high. Instead of splurging on a kit for each kid (which can add up pretty quickly), buy your own supplies and make your own gingerbread houses instead!



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- 👤 **Drink hot chocolate and see holiday lights:** You can't go wrong with a cup of hot chocolate and a trip around the neighborhood to check out holiday lights. Whether you decide to take a walk or bundle up in the car in your pajamas, you're sure to get in the holiday spirit. Make it even better by playing Holiday music while you drive around!
  - 👤 **Volunteer in Your Community:** Help spread joy this season by volunteering in your community. There are many opportunities to help if you just search for them. Check your church, local homeless shelter, and even your library to help you find a way to give back this year. You can even ask if there is a way you can volunteer by folding brochures or stuffing blessing bags from home!
  - 👤 **Have a Movie Night:** Host a holiday movie night every Friday evening. Allow each family member to pick one movie that the entire family can enjoy together. This is a completely free family holiday activity that is perfect for any age. Want to make these nights even more memorable? Add hot chocolate, popcorn, or even a homemade dessert to the night for added memories!
  - 👤 **Go on a Candy Cane Scavenger Hunt:** Hide candy canes all over your house and yard. Allow your children to go for a candy cane scavenger hunt for each sweet treat. Think of this as an Easter Egg hunt but with candy canes!
  - 👤 **Start a Gratitude Jar:** Starting in December (or whenever you can), have each family member write one thing they are grateful for each day on a piece of paper. Place the strip of paper in a jar and read every piece out loud on Christmas Eve.
  - 👤 **Make Paper Snowflakes:** Get your kids in the crafting mode by allowing them to make paper snowflakes. Allow them to hang them inside their bedrooms and around the house. Play holiday music to make this an even more festive family holiday activity.
  - 👤 **Go see a Holiday Production:** Check out your local high schools, colleges, or community theaters for any upcoming holiday productions. You can attend a play, a Christmas concert, or even a ballet on a budget when you're supporting local schools. Not only will you be enjoying something you don't see every day, but you will also be exposing your children to fine arts.



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# Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

Some people suffer from symptoms of depression during the winter months, with symptoms subsiding during the spring and summer months. These symptoms may be a sign of seasonal affective disorder (SAD). SAD is a mood disorder associated with depression and related to seasonal variations of light. SAD affects half a million people every winter between September and April, peaking in December, January, and February. The "Winter Blues," a milder form of SAD, may affect even more people.

## Symptoms

- \* Depression: Misery, guilt, loss of self-esteem, hopelessness, despair, and apathy
- \* Anxiety: Tension and inability to tolerate stress
- \* Mood changes: Extremes of mood and, in some, periods of mania in spring and summer
- \* Sleep problems: Desire to oversleep and difficulty staying awake or, sometimes, disturbed sleep and early morning waking
- \* Lethargy: Feeling of fatigue and inability to carry out normal routine
- \* Overeating: Craving for starchy and sweet foods resulting in weight gain
- \* Social problems: Irritability and desire to avoid social contact

## Causes

As sunlight has affected the seasonal activities of animals (i.e., hibernation), SAD may be an effect of this seasonal light variation in humans. As seasons change, there is a shift in our "biological internal clocks" or circadian rhythm, due partly to these changes in sunlight patterns. This can cause our biological clocks to be out of "step" with our daily schedules.

Melatonin, a sleep-related hormone secreted by the pineal gland in the brain, has been linked to SAD. This hormone, which may cause symptoms of depression, is produced at increased levels in the dark. Therefore, when the days are shorter and darker the production of this hormone increases.

## Treatments

Talk to your doctor about treatment options if you think you may be suffering from Seasonal Affect Disorder. Phototherapy or bright light therapy has been shown to suppress the brain's secretion of melatonin. For mild symptoms, spending time outdoors during the day or arranging homes and workplaces to receive more sunlight may be helpful. One study found that an hour's walk in winter sunlight was as effective as two and a half hours under bright artificial light.

