



# Getting Through the Dark Months

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## Seasonal Affective Disorder

## Overview

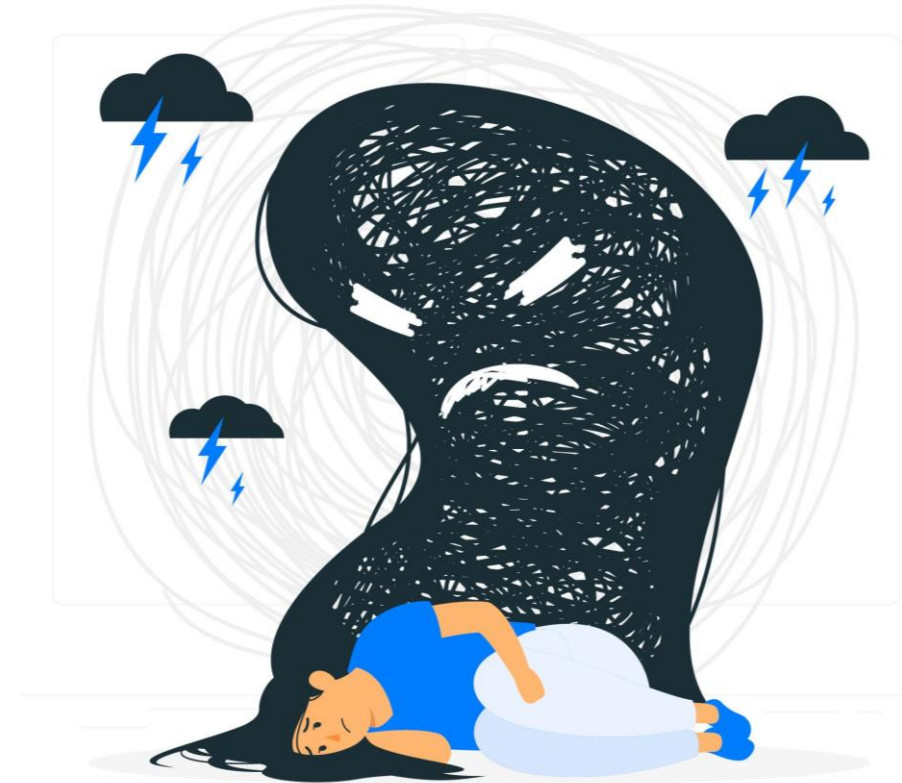
- An introduction to SAD
- Symptoms and causes
- Risk factors
- Treating SAD
- Other ways to help with SAD



## What is Seasonal Affective Disorder?

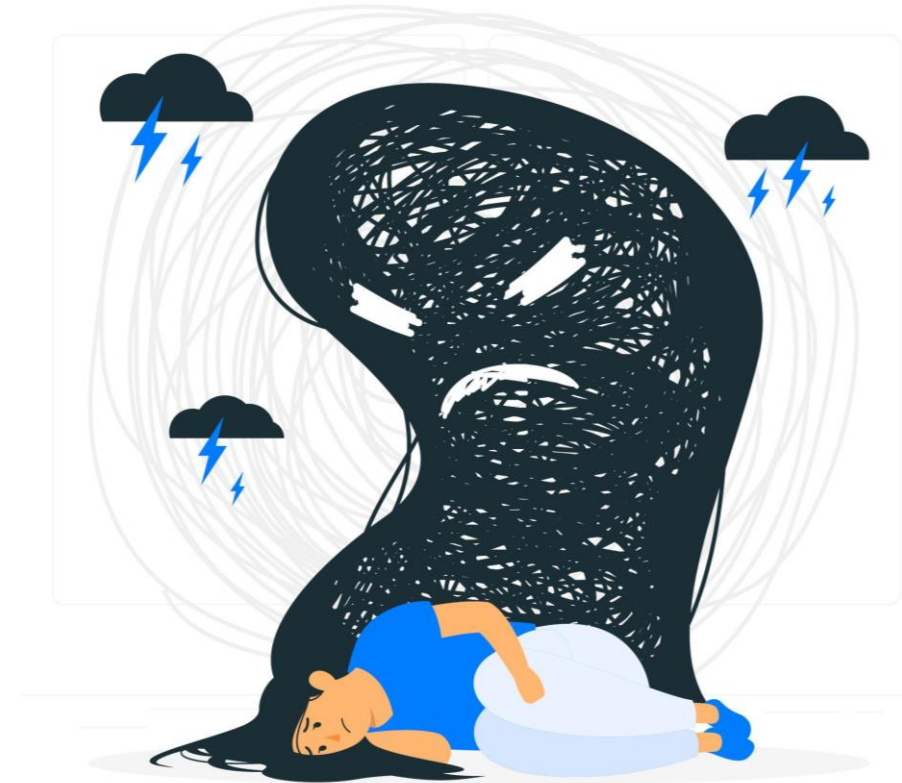
- A condition related to the **shortening of daylight hours**
- A mild to moderate form of **depression** that occurs during the fall and winter months
- Key feature: it's **cyclical**. It appears each year as the seasons change and disappears during spring and summer

It's not the same as the “winter blues”!



## The symptoms of SAD

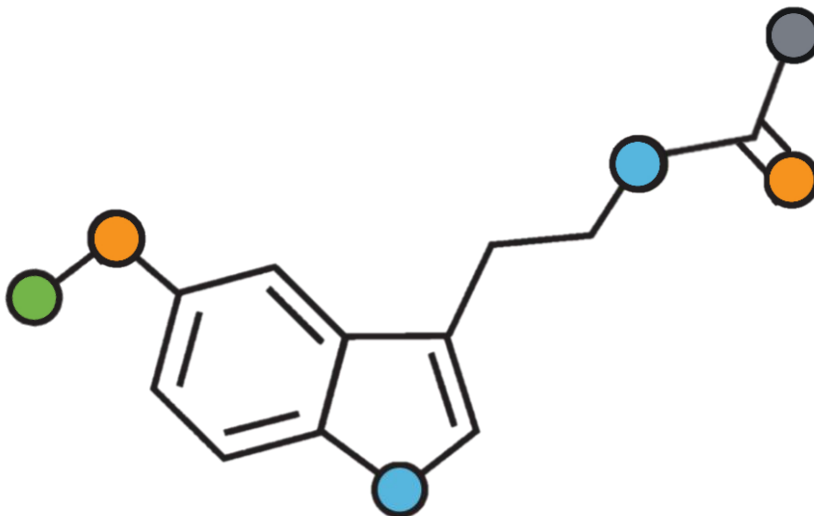
- Incorrectly blaming yourself
- Difficulty doing easy or enjoyable activities
- Difficulty thinking and concentrating
- Feeling more lethargic
- Difficulty getting up when days are shorter
- Oversleeping
- Craving carb-heavy foods



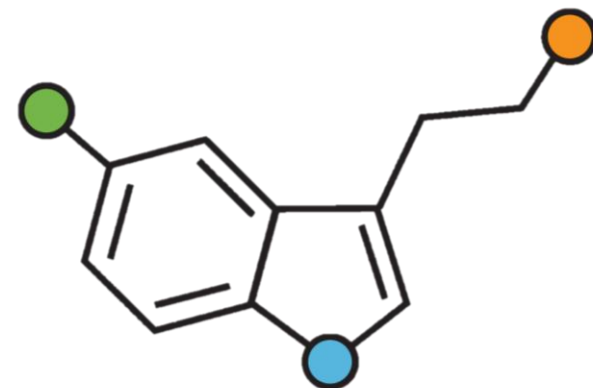
## Three main contributors



Circadian  
Rhythm



Melatonin



Serotonin

## Are you at risk?

- Women more than men
- Over 20 years of age
- Immediate family members have been affected
- Live in the northern latitudes



## Treating SAD

- Light therapy
- Cognitive behavioural therapy
- Medication
- The Optimal Wellness Effect
  - Practicing Self-Care
  - Building Resiliency
  - Finding Happiness

*The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence recommends that SAD should be treated in the same way as other types of depression.*

## Treating SAD with light therapy

- Uses a **light box** that is much brighter than indoor lighting
- Increases **serotonin**, decreases **melatonin**
- Effective for **70%** of participants after a few weeks<sup>1</sup>
- Long-term benefits unclear
- Commercially available
- Compliance and consistency is crucial!



<sup>1</sup>National Institute of Health, 2013



## Treating SAD with CBT

- Cognitive behavioural therapy is based on the idea that the way we **think** and **act** may affect the way we **feel**
- Therapist fosters **behavioural skills** (identify, schedule, doing enjoyable things), and **cognitive skills** (identify and challenge negative thoughts)
- Should counteract the lethargic moods and “hibernation” tendencies



## Treating SAD with medication

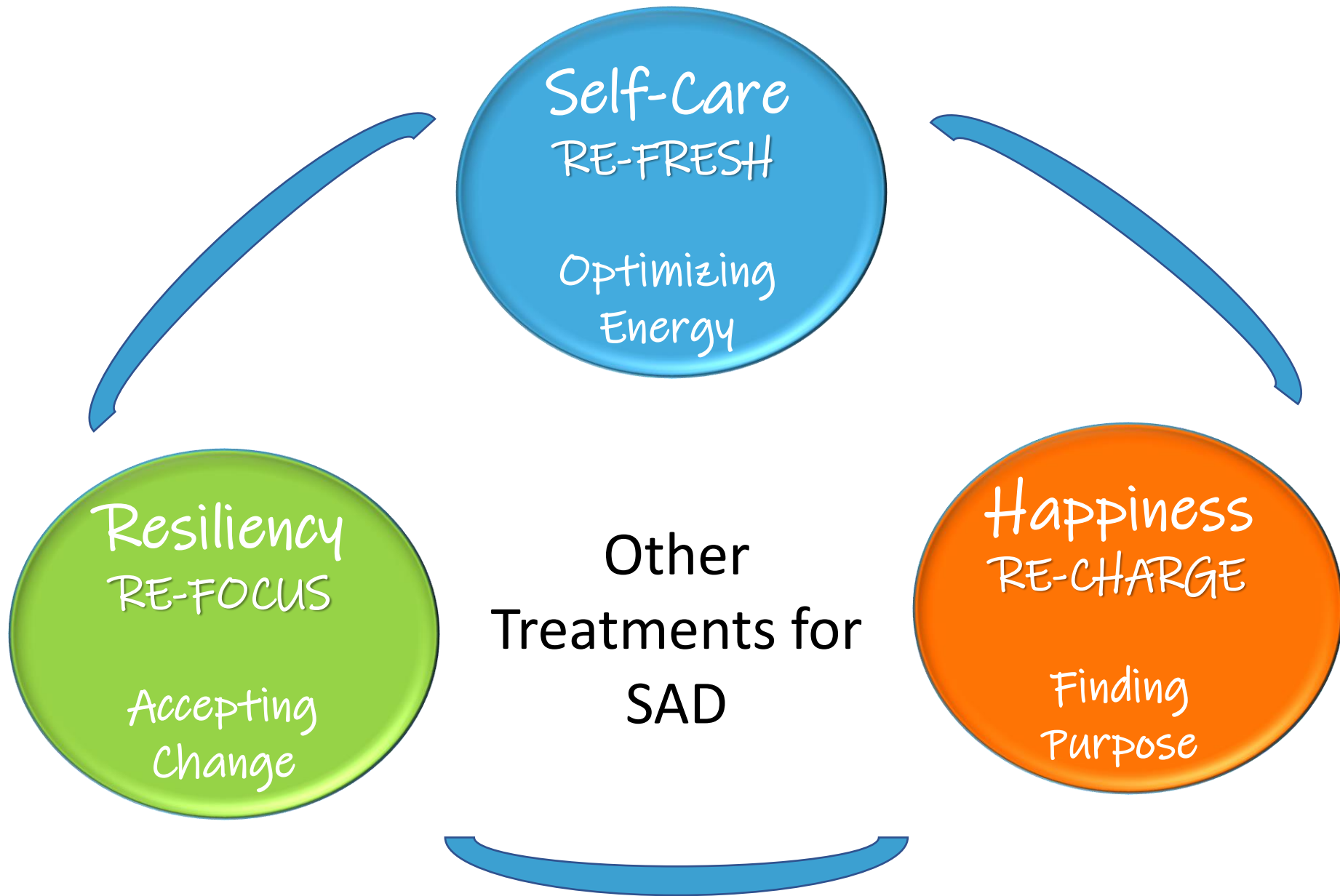
- When severe, SAD can be treated with selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs)
- Increases serotonin, which lifts mood
- MUST be taken as prescribed and even when you begin to feel better



## Working from home/remote

- Isolation
- Lack of social connection
- Working too many hours
- What are your boundaries?
- Is your work set-up well lit with natural light?





# SELF-CARE – RE-FRESH

## Assess Your Energy

Assess Your  
Energy Levels



Make a List



Determine  
Energy Cycles

Time Management vs Energy Management

Energizers (what gives you fulfilment?) vs  
Suckers (what destroys your spirit?)

Balance Ener-gizers with Ener-suckers  
Time of Day

## Treating SAD with a healthy diet



Great Choices  
Reduce SAD symptoms

## Treating SAD with a healthy diet



Eating  
whenever I have  
time as long as  
it's healthy



Avoiding all  
carbs to keep  
my glucose  
levels down

Not So Great Choices  
**Increase SAD symptoms**

"At last, a book about how to achieve hormonal health that looks at the big picture. This book is a treasure."  
Dr. Christiane Northrup,  
author of *The Wisdom of Menopause*

#1  
NATIONAL  
BESTSELLER

# THE HORMONE DIET

Lose Fat. Gain Strength.  
Live Younger Longer.



DR. NATASHA TURNER  
NATUROPATHIC DOCTOR



# Prioritize Your Health Mindful Movement



**No Movement = Sloth-mode**

  
**OXYGEN**

do more  
of what  
makes you  
happy ❤️

# Take 5, Then Decide

- ✓ Something is better than nothing.
- ✓ Choose movements that offer maximum benefits (try a microburst).
- ✓ Hectic is NOT aerobic.
- ✓ Exercise is NOT a chore.

“It’s deciding that the longevity of your body and mind are important enough.”

# Habit Stacking



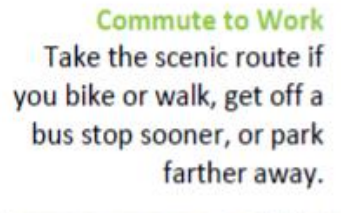
## Morning Coffee

Take some deep breaths and stretch between sips.



## Morning Routine

Work in some body-conditioning with squats, lunges, and heel raises as you brush.



## Commute to Work

Take the scenic route if you bike or walk, get off a bus stop sooner, or park farther away.



## Social Media Check

March on the spot as you catch up on posts.



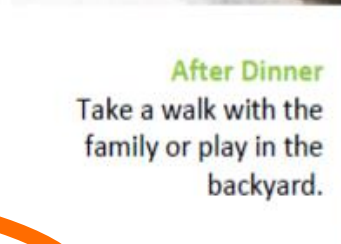
## Afternoon Slump

Re-energize your body with a 10-minute microburst.



## Dinner Prep

Make dinner prep fun by dancing as you cook.



## After Dinner

Take a walk with the family or play in the backyard.



## Before Bed

Wrap up the day with 10 minutes of yoga.



## Treating SAD by regulating sleep

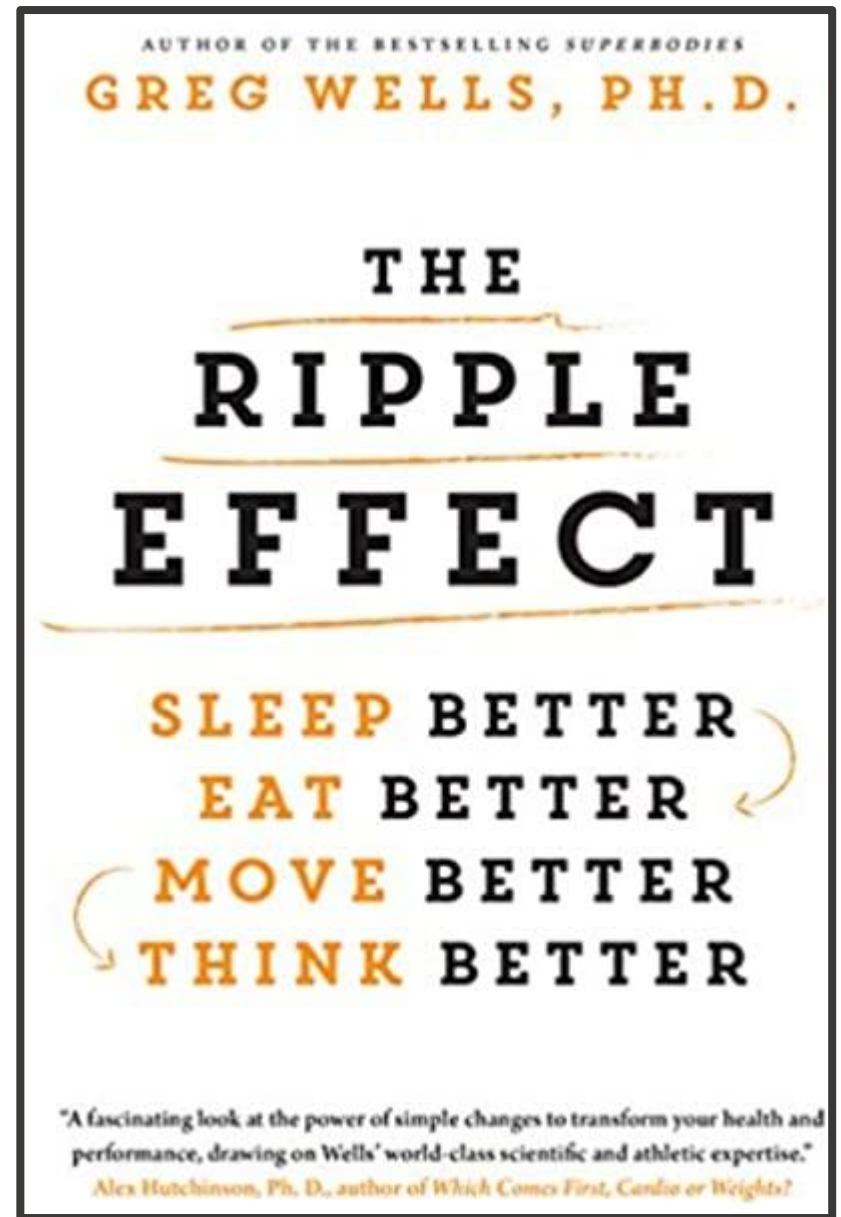
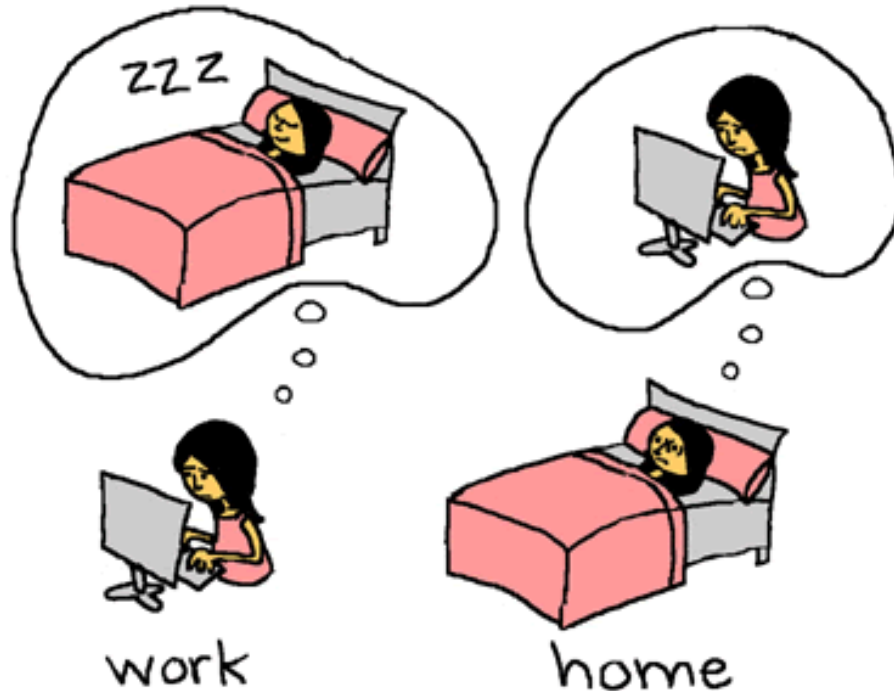
- Set a regular sleep schedule
- Go to bed earlier so you don't oversleep
- Get up after 15 mins!

Remember... increased melatonin may lead to increased feelings of depression



# Prioritize Your Health

## Restful Sleep



# RESILIENCY – RE-FOCUS

## Accepting Change

Time to Adjust



Control the  
Controllable



What is the  
Opportunity?

Accept what you can't change; Keep an open mind; Communicate; Self-Compassion

Focus on the present; Acknowledge negative story; Disrupt the pattern (options of 3, not 1)

New beginning; Goal setting; Positive mindset; Tapping into meaningful purpose

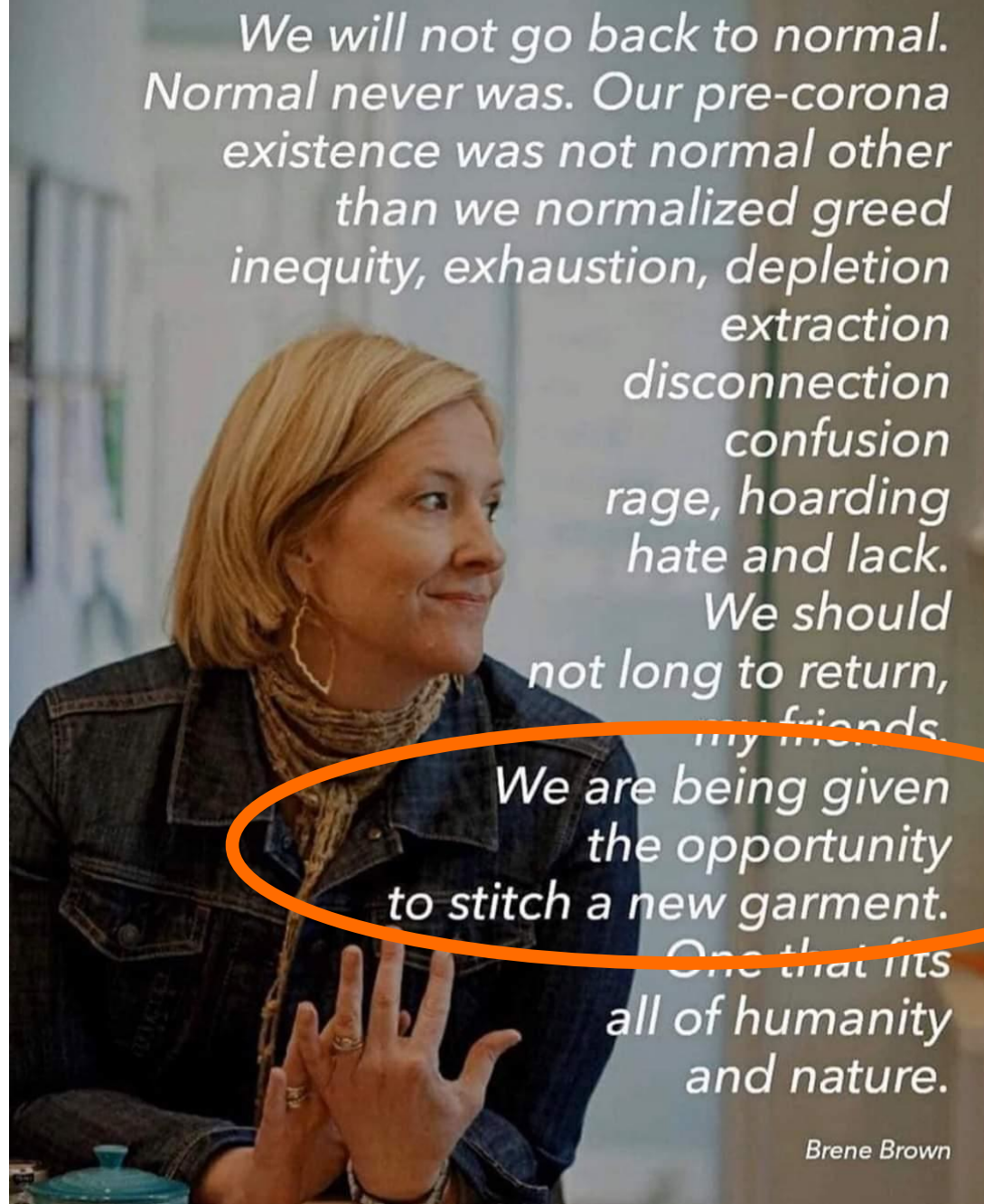
*We will not go back to normal.  
Normal never was. Our pre-corona  
existence was not normal other  
than we normalized greed  
inequity, exhaustion, depletion  
extraction  
disconnection  
confusion  
rage, hoarding  
hate and lack.*

*We should  
not long to return,  
my friends.*

*We are being given  
the opportunity  
to stitch a new garment.*

*One that fits  
all of humanity  
and nature.*

*Brene Brown*



# RELAX to Reflect

**Deep Breathing – 10 times,  
2x/day**  
**Meditation – calm.com**  
**Self-Development**



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# HAPPINESS – RE-CHARGE

## Finding Meaningful Purpose

Connection



Empowerment



What's your  
Purpose?

Meaningful relationships. Meaningful work.  
What brings you joy?

What drives you? What motivates you?  
What balances you? Positive mindset.

Who are you, truly? What fills your cup?  
What fulfills you?

TELL THE NEGATIVE  
COMMITTEE THAT MEETS  
INSIDE YOUR HEAD TO  
SIT DOWN AND  
SHUT UP

- Ann Bradford

**Can I control?**  
**Options of 3, not 1**

**Create a buffer**  
**10 minutes**



# Name Your Worries



brother





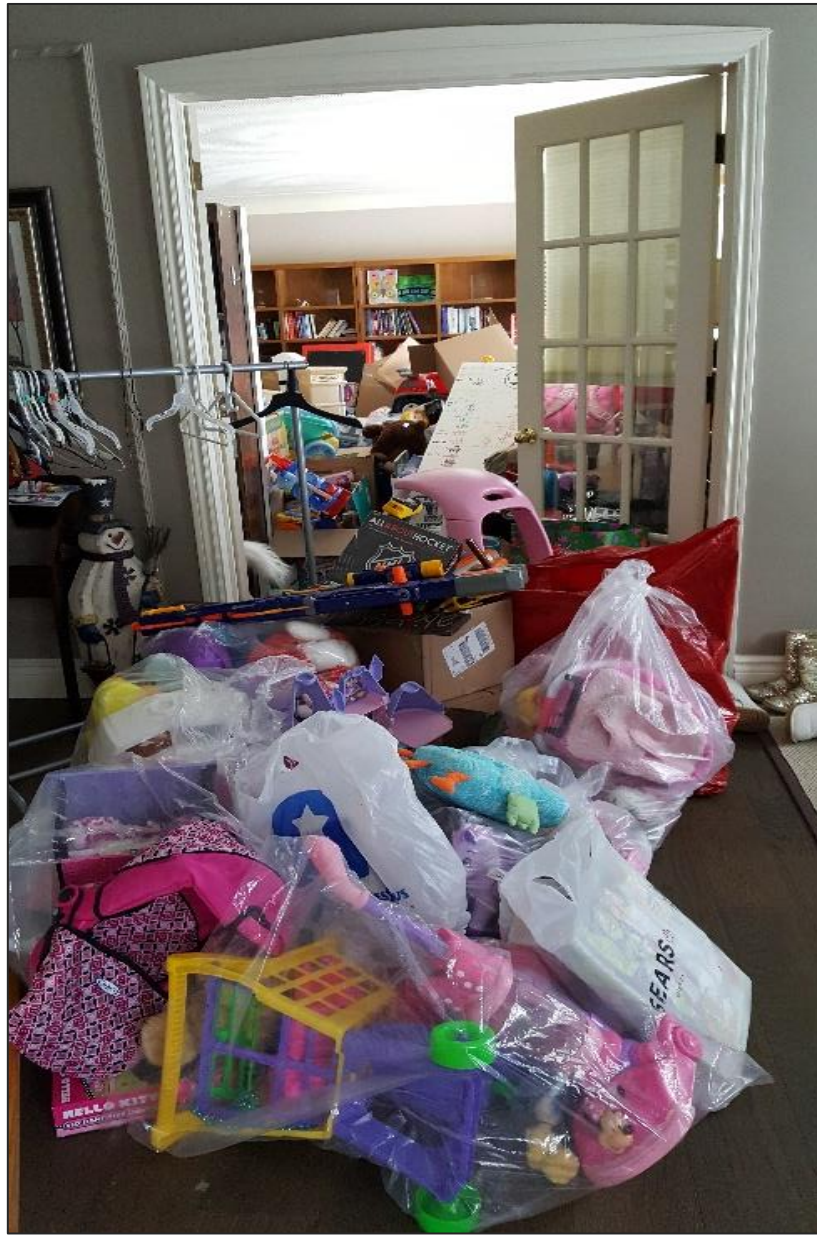
Don't look for  
**Happiness**  
create it.

SOMEDAY YOU'LL  
LOOK BACK &  
UNDERSTAND  
WHY IT ALL  
HAPPENED  
THE WAY  
IT DID.

**TODAY I WILL  
BE HAPPIER  
THAN A BIRD  
WITH A  
FRENCH FRY**



**Do More of What  
Makes You Happy**



My name is Jacob Jansen. I am in your child's class. I helped out at my church this week organizing presents for kids who don't have much money. I went right home and went up to my room and picked out toy and books I didn't want or need any more. I wanted to do more! I talked to my mommy and daddy I wondered if I could run a program that gives toy to other kids. I think it would be cool if all my class brought in what they could to add to the presents but (under ten though because my daddy's truck is only so big!) My dad is going to help me take the from school to the church next Thursday. Thank you for helping out and have a Merry Christmas  
By Jacob Jansen



# Happiness Jar

Write down something that made you happy every day for a year, then open the jar and read about all the amazing things that happened.



# Health Coaches here for YOU!

## EFAP





# Resources

Armstrong, R. (2007). How to beat the winter blues. The Independent.

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National Health Service Choices. (2013). Seasonal affective disorder – treatment. Retrieved from [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

National Institute of Health. (2013). Beat the winter blues: Shedding light on seasonal sadness.

Piccoli, G. (2007). Beating the Winter Blues: A practical guide on how to get through winter at Cornell. Cornell University, Gannett Health Services.

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