



# EMPOWERED

IMPROVING LGBTQ+ MENTAL HEALTH

## Dealing with Seasonal Affective Disorder

By Emery van Broekhuizen

During the winter months about 5% of people in the U.S. experience seasonal affective disorder (**Torres, 2020**), also referred to as SAD or “winter blues.” SAD is a type of depression that occurs in specific seasons and is often experienced in the winter months due to shorter days and less sunlight. Notably, the prevalence among LGBTQ+ folks is higher due to additional societal pressures during the holiday season (**Gentile, 2016**).

Knowing this, what are some steps we can take to overcome seasonal affective disorder? One of the simplest solutions is to incorporate a wellness plan into your schedule, such as regular exercise, establishing a sleep schedule, maintaining healthy eating habits, and connecting with our friends and chosen family. Some folks have found that talk therapy, light exposure therapy, antidepressant medication, or a combination of these can be beneficial to combat depressive episodes. While medication requires a medical professional, there are tools and resources available for talk therapy and light therapy that anyone can use.

A form of talk therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) can be helpful year round and can

help to rewire the negative thought processes we often find ourselves in during hard times. Listing accomplishments each day or at the end of the week can build a habit of positive self-talk and affirmations. Some of us have been programmed to dwell on negative thoughts, but with CBT, we can start to see the world in a more positive light and recognize our own value. A handful of mobile apps provide daily CBT journals, and you can also seek out help from an online or local therapist to dig deeper.

Light exposure therapy can be done with short 20-minute sessions per day and many people notice an improvement in mood within a week or

two of starting therapy. Sun lamps are readily available at a variety of online retailers or can be purchased directly from companies specializing in light therapy. **Verywell Mind offers a review of eight different lamps here.**

Seasonal Affective Disorder is treatable, and it is okay to seek out support. Remember that you have a proven track record of getting through every winter season prior to this and you can do it again!



## ENVISION:YOU IN THE NEWS

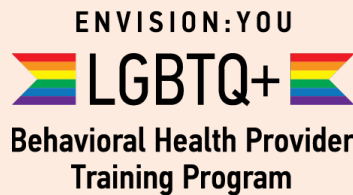
### 5 HEALTHY TIPS ...for Post-Holiday Blues

- 1 Practice mindfulness and meditation** techniques; remember to be grateful for the positive experiences you had and that they will occur again soon.
- 2 Engage in self-care activities;** especially since the holidays provided a certain level of stress, even positive stress.
- 3 Reach out for help** if you need it; don't suffer in silence.
- 4 Surround yourself with loved ones** (animals count!); just because the holidays are over doesn't mean that you stop surrounding yourself with loved ones.
- 5 Look forward, not backward:** plan an activity to do with loved ones in the next few weeks

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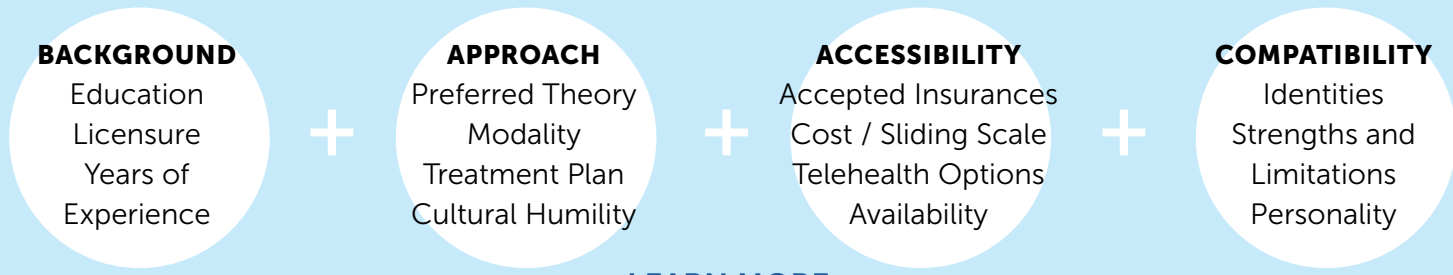
### NO COST OR DISCOUNTED TRAINING OPPORTUNITY

Envision:You was recently awarded a grant to continue work on our **LGBTQ+ Behavioral Health Provider Training Program** from the **Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS)**. This grant was made possible through Colorado's Behavioral Health Recovery Act, which



provided \$2 million to provide culturally relevant workforce training for behavioral health care workers throughout the state. Providers and organizations can now fill out our **interest form** to qualify for discounted or no cost training!

### HOW TO CHOOSE A THERAPIST



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### NEW STAFF HIGHLIGHT



We would like to welcome Gabby Poux (she/her) to the Envision:You team as the marketing & communications coordinator. Gabby received her bachelor's degree in marketing with a focus in cinematography. She brings eight years of experience in social media, marketing, and editorial photography to the position. Gabby is an

ally of the LGTBQ+ community and wants to empower and support disempowered groups with her work. Gabby has three animals: Jake the snake, Leo the three-year-old chiweenie, and King the one-year-old pit bull. Her favorite hobbies are photography, gardening, hiking, fishing, and reading. Gabby's favorite book is *Small Doses* by Amanda Seales.