



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
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## **Coping with holiday stress and depression** *Tips for minimizing anxiety*

HILLSIDE, IL – If the waning light and falling temperatures have you feeling blue, you’re not alone, and there is help. That’s the message that the Proviso Township Mental Health Commission (PTMHC) is promoting as the holiday season gets into full swing.

“On top of all of the stress of crowded stores, financial pressure, family problems and high expectations during the holidays, many people cope with seasonal depression,” PTMHC board President Mike Corrigan said. “It’s nothing to be ashamed or embarrassed of and there are places to get treatment, just like you would for diabetes or any other health issue.”

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is a kind of depression triggered by the changing seasons, and it affects nearly ten million people in the United States. Experts say that SAD can happen during any seasonal change but is more common during the winter months when sunlight is scarce.

“In the winter months, we don’t get much sunlight,” said Shelly Lustrup, Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Director of Recovery Support Services at NAMI Metro Suburban. “We get up before the sun rises and it is usually set by the time many of us are done with work. That can lead to low levels of serotonin and melatonin and can have profound impacts on our mental health.”

Symptoms of SAD are similar to depression and can include oversleeping and eating, lost interest in previously enjoyed activities, irritability, anxiety, low energy and depressed mood. Left unaddressed, SAD can develop into serious health problems. Often treatment is simple and can include light therapy with a light box that simulates high intensity sunlight, psychotherapy, or medication.

The Proviso Township Mental Health Commission provides financial assistance to dozens of social service agencies offering township residents services and treatment for mental health, developmental disabilities, substance abuse and other issues related to behavioral health.

The experts at the Commission’s member agencies offer these tips for keeping yourself mentally healthy during the winter months and holiday season:

- Get some sun. Keep window coverings open during the day and try to get outside even if it’s cloudy.
- Exercise. Go for a walk or head to the gym.
- Be social.
- Practice good stress management.

- Get good quality sleep. Try to go to bed and wake up at the same time each day, even on weekends.
- Reach out if you need help. The Proviso Township Mental Health Commission and its partners are always available.

“The holidays should be a time for celebrations, social gatherings and reflection,” said PTMHC’s Executive Director Jesse D. Rosas. “But we have to acknowledge that that isn’t the case for everyone all of the time. Our agencies are here for those who need help.”

For more information, contact Proviso Township Mental Health Commission at 708-449-5580.

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

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