Changing seasons might affect your mental health

The month of March brings about the autumn season, preparing us for the cold, insular winter.

Some research suggests that many mental disorders could have peaks during the colder seasons. One such disorder is Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) that is a mental disorder affected by the changing of seasons.

The reduced level of sunlight in autumn and winter months may affect an individual’s serotonin, a neurotransmitter that affects one’s mood. Some symptoms that are typically more common in seasonal depression than in other forms of depression, are carbohydrate craving, increased appetite, excessive sleepiness, and weight gain.

Some prevention tools to help seasonal effects:

>> Light therapy
>> Exercising more often
>> Meditation
>> Stress management techniques
>> Spending more time outside
>> Bedtime rituals to ensure restful sleep
One year since our KwaZulu-Natal Office opened, our team reflects on the amazing support we received from the local community. Dr Suvira Ramlall and Sunthosh Pillay humbly started the KZN Mental Health Advocacy Group 4 years ago, which formed a strong platform in the KZN region. Last year they initiated joint forces with SADAG, based in Johannesburg, to extend their mental health advocacy and interventions through on-the-ground programmes, workshops, talks and presentations.

We are passionate about creating healthy minds and we are hopeful that our programmes will create the support that our communities need to thrive. Thank you for your continued support, it is invaluable in promoting our collective vision!

**MYTH 1:** People living with bipolar disorder spend most of their time in mania

People diagnosed with bipolar disorder experience depression exponentially more often than mania in their daily lives.

**MYTH 2:** People living with bipolar disorder are often out of control or dangerous

People diagnosed with bipolar disorder, when receiving proper treatment, can and most often do avoid the extremes of either mania or depression.

**MYTH 3:** People living with bipolar disorder don’t want to give up the highs of mania

People diagnosed with bipolar disorder experience mania far more often as unpleasant agitation and irritability rather than pleasant euphoria.

**MYTH 4:** People living with bipolar disorder are unreliable, untrustworthy & unemployable

People diagnosed with bipolar disorder can live extraordinary lives as contributors in many industries as well as in high-level professional roles. The reason why the public too rarely sees this reality is that people are often afraid to share that they live with bipolar disorder because of stigma and discrimination.

**Bipolar disorder** (once known as manic depression or manic-depressive disorder) causes serious shifts in mood, energy, thinking, and behavior—from the highs of mania on one extreme, to the lows of depression on the other.

Click here to read more
Our community initiatives are made possible through the support of many individuals and organizations, we would like to thank all of you!
A support group can be defined as:
“a gathering of people with common experiences and concerns who meet together to provide emotional and moral support for one another. They encourage a sense of community, a source of empathetic understanding and provide an avenue for establishing social networks.”
Mental Health America’s Support Group Facilitation Guide (2016).

Mental health is a global health crisis. In South Africa, as in most places in the world, there are not enough psychologists for individual psychotherapy. Support groups offer a practical but effective solution for helping to fill the enormous treatment gap that exists in our country. For this reason, one of the core services that SADAG offers is the establishment of support groups for mental health.

Support Groups offer a place of understanding, care and support to anyone suffering from a mental illness, as well as their loved ones.

Some of the benefits of support groups:

+ Provide a safe space to share your stories in a non-judgemental and confidential atmosphere
+ Provide the opportunity to form connections with others experiencing similar experiences and to learn from one another
+ Help to develop a network of support
+ Help you to take control of your mental illness through sharing information and coping strategies
+ Create a culture of equality
+ Change attitudes and help reduce stigma

SADAG support groups are not run by specialists, but by people with a passion to support others. Running a support group is an incredibly rewarding experience and highlights the important role each of us can play in our community. Our new support group leaders are given a support group leaders “starter pack” and receive training on how to market their group, finding suitable venues, how to facilitate their group. SADAG will provide ongoing support to the leaders.

Our last SUPPORT GROUP LEADER TRAINING took place on Saturday, 16 March, 2019 and was attended by 44 participants. Thanks to all those who attended, we hope you will soon be starting your own groups!
A NUMBER OF SUPPORT GROUPS OPERATE FROM SADAG KZN
Life St. Joseph’s Hospital,
82 Mazisi Kunene Road, Glenwood, Durban

SADAG KZN 2019
MONTHLY IN-OFFICE SUPPORT

SOLOS (Survivors of Loved One’s of Suicide) and Depression group
18.00pm - 19.00pm
Contact Lori on suicideprevent@gmail.com or whatsapp 083 652 0117

Depression and Anxiety Support Group
12.30pm - 14.00pm
Contact Lynn on kzn sadag@anxiety.org.za or whatsapp 078 278 7047

Support Group Leaders Forum
16.15pm - 17.00pm
Self care is important! Inviting all Support Group Leaders to join our monthly forum with Clinical Psychologist, Sunil Pillay. This forum offers a space for personal support and debriefing. It also gives leaders the opportunity for supervisory and confidential support around issues arising in their groups.
For more info and to confirm attendance email Lynn on kzn sadag@anxiety.org.za or Whatsapp 078 278 7047

5 APR

Student Support Group - UKZN
13.00 - 14.00pm - Howard College Campus
Support group for all students across facilities at Howard Campus. Address details on next page. For more information, contact Anne on 081 206 3482

NEW IN-OFFICE SUPPORT GROUPS

Contact Lynne Richards on mentalhealthmatters3@gmail.com for more information

Support Group with Revani & Krisanya
11.00am - 12.00pm
1 APR

Support Group with Rivendri & Lynne
09.00am - 10.30am
5 APR

Support Group with Noor & Wandisa
14.00pm - 15.30pm
6 APR

Support Group with Micaela & Lorelle
16.30pm - 18.00pm

YOU CAN BE A SUPPORT GROUP LEADER!
KZN currently has various groups in and around the Ethekwini district, Empangeni, Estcourt, Ladysmith, Newcastle, Pietermaritzburg and Verulam. We would love to spread these groups more widely across our province.

To find out more information on HOW TO START A SADAG SUPPORT GROUP, please contact Lynn at kzn sadag@anxiety.org.za who will be able to answer all your questions and send you more information.

Specialist Weekly

The Mum’s Support Network

Thursdays & Saturdays - La Lucia Library
The Mums Support Network has weekly meetings at the La Lucia Library. This group is aimed at mums-to-be and new mums who are suffering from any form of “perinatal distress”: which can include depression, anxiety, anger, self harm etc. The group welcomes ANY mother or mum-to-be who is going through a hard time and needs advice, love and support. For more information, contact Alexandra on Alexandra@mumsupport.co.za

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Volunteers monthly meetings
First Friday of the month, 2pm - 4pm
Join us for tea and coffee and learn about our current projects and work in teams with other volunteers

>> Next one on 5 April 2019
CALLING ALL REGISTERED HEALTH PROFESSIONALS TO CLICK HERE TO JOIN US!

In order to make a tangible difference to under-served communities, SADAG KZN relies on a wide network of health professionals who are willing to help us. If you can spare a minimum of an hour a month to assist us, we would highly appreciate it!

Some of the ways you can help:
- Support our support group leaders
- Do a talk or run a workshop
- Supervise or train our volunteers
- Engage with the media
- Help fundraise to keep our doors open
- Accept referrals from the community
- Conduct research or evaluation

Email: kznsadag@anxiety.org.za or
Whatsapp: 078 278 7047

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**NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES (NCD'S) AND MENTAL HEALTH**

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are the leading cause of death worldwide and are responsible for a large proportion of premature mortality. Almost three quarters of all NCD deaths, and 82% of the 16 million people who died prematurely, or before reaching 70 years of age, occur in low- and middle-income countries. The main NCD categories are:

* Cardiovascular diseases
* Cancer
* Chronic respiratory diseases
* Diabetes

NCDs are largely preventable and global action plans have aimed to reduce the burden of NCDs through targeted action on seven risk factors: tobacco use, harmful use of alcohol, physical inactivity, sodium intake, raised blood pressure, obesity, and diabetes.

**Mental health disorders**, such as depression, represent an important risk factor for premature mortality and are linked to associated physical health issues, such as cardiovascular disease and cancer. For example, depression is associated with behaviours that lead to increased risk of other NCDs (e.g., alcohol consumption and tobacco smoking or dependence, poor diet, reduced physical exercise) and other underlying mechanisms (e.g., abnormalities of the stress response system) are likely to be at play in linking depression with physical health. Moreover, depression negatively affects the treatment of other NCDs.

Mental health disorders are a serious and often debilitating form of NCD with far-reaching consequences on quality of life and socioeconomic attainment, for individuals and their families, and throughout generations. They represent the leading cause of years living with disability (YLDs) worldwide, with the greatest mental health-related burden being attributable to depression.

The World Health Organization (WHO) recognises that good mental health is related to mental and psychological well-being. WHO’s work to improve the mental health of individuals and society at large, includes the promotion of mental well-being, the prevention of mental disorders, the protection of human rights and the care of people affected by mental disorders.

© The Lancet, Mental Health and global strategies to reduce NCDs and premature mortality, August 2017

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**SADAG NATIONAL HELPLINE**

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