

Not Feeling Spring in Your Step?

You're not alone. Here's what you can do.

By Emma Martin, MA



Springtime often conjures up images of sunshine, new growth, and shaking off the lingering chill of winter. Many of us might experience a sense of renewal and excitement when daylight saving time hits and we spring forward one hour. We've been dreaming of patio season and warm walks around the lakes all winter long, and now those dreams are almost a reality.

However, some of us might not feel an energy boost when the days start lengthening and the snow begins to melt. We might experience more mental health symptoms such as depression, anxiety, and irritability once spring begins. For some of us, spring means increased difficulties in sleeping, the beginning of allergies, and more examples of how others around us are enjoying the warm weather and sunshine while we're stuck feeling sad and worried.

Suicide rates spike with longer days

According to the Centers for Disease Control, suicide rates spike in the spring, with a variety of factors potentially contributing to this seasonal increase.¹ A 2014 study published in *JAMA Psychiatry* found that as hours of sunlight during the day increased, so did the rate of suicide.²

Longer days disrupt sleep, depress mood

Brighter and longer days can also interrupt melatonin production in our brains, which helps regulate our sleep patterns, resulting in little to no sleep. Disrupted sleep can lead to low mood and irritability. And while most of us associate Seasonal Affective Disorder with the dreary winter months, many individuals experience these depressive symptoms in the spring.

¹ [Center for Disease Control. Holiday Suicides: Fact or Myth?](#)

² [Vyssoki, B., Kapusta, N.D., Prasczak-Rieder, N. et al. \(2014\). Direct Effect of Sunshine on Suicide. *JAMA Psychiatry*. 2014;71\(11\):1231-1237](#)

Allergies interfere with normal activities

Many individuals experience an increase in allergy symptoms in the springtime. Sometimes, those who have spring allergies also experience sluggishness, fatigue, irritability, and sadness. Allergy medicine can sometimes slow people down and make them feel drowsy, resulting in them not being able to participate in the activities they may normally enjoy – which can negatively impact mood.

Feelings of isolation as others out ‘having fun’

Additionally, individuals who already feel anxious and depressed might have an increase in symptoms during the spring. They may see their friends posting on social media about how much fun they’re having out in the sun, enjoying the warm weather with friends and family, and in turn, feel more isolated. Families might go on vacation during the springtime and social groups that came together over the winter months may be disbanding as the weather warms. Changes in social interactions and perceptions of belonging can also lead to increased depressive and anxiety symptoms.

Feeling down in the dumps in the spring is not unusual. Many people experience emotional health symptoms in the spring. And there are many ways to address those symptoms in order to be able to enjoy the longer days and warmer weather that’s coming our way.

Try these tips to put the spring back in your step:

- If you’re feeling the sadness and blues, experiencing racing thoughts and worries, or feeling irritable and easily bothered, know that you’re not alone. Many others around you may also be struggling to enjoy the warmth and sunshine of the changing seasons.
- Longer days mean more sunshine after the work day, which can be a great time to go for a walk around the lake with a family member, friend, coworker, or neighbor. Exercise and staying active, especially with a friend, can do wonders for depression and anxiety. If the budding trees make your allergies act up, try some stretches or yoga inside, or take a trip to the gym.
- Remember to maintain a healthy sleep pattern, getting 8 to 10 hours of sleep each night. Being unrested leaves us more vulnerable to stress.
- Make sure to practice self-care. Engage in the activities that fill you up with joy and contentedness and make you feel proud to be you.
- Ask for support from friends, family members, and professionals. Seek out professional help when something feels wrong. 1 in 5 adults in America experience a mental illness, but nearly 60% of those adults don’t receive treatment, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness³. You deserve the support you need.

With support, it *is* possible to put the spring back in your step so you can find joy and live your life to the fullest. If you or someone you know is struggling, Headway can help. [Contact us](#) for a free, 20-minute introductory session to learn more.

About Emma Martin, MA

Emma Martin is a Headway therapist based in Burnsville-Eagan-Savage School District 191. She joined Headway in August 2016 and has worked in the human services field since 2011. Emma has previous experience working with children, adolescents, and their families in multiple different education venues, including The Annica Program, the Minnesota Autism Center and the Anova Center for Education. As a school-based therapist, she collaborates with families and school administration to provide a supportive and nurturing environment for her clients to learn, heal, and grow.

³ [National Alliance on Mental Illness. Mental Health by the Numbers.](#)