

The Well-Woman

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Note From the Director

Giselle Harrington, Director of the Well-Woman Health Promotion

The Well-Woman calendar designates December as the month to pay attention to the spiritual aspect of our being. The Moslem month-long observance of Ramadan has begun; Christmas, Hanukkah and Kwanza celebrations are approaching. Whether we celebrate those holidays or not it is difficult not to be aware of the winter solstice, the darkening days and the longing for brightness and sunlight.

At the same time, it is exam period and papers are due. It is easy to become totally preoccupied and involved in studying and writing and worrying about grades. I would like to encourage everyone to take a moment from the hectic days ahead to think about those less fortunate than ourselves and to do something that could make their lives a little better. What a luxury it is to be able to worry about a grade, when others do not even know where their next meal will come from. Paying attention to one's spiritual life does not only mean going to a house of worship. It means being in touch with something larger than oneself and finding ways to express gratitude for our abundance.

All of us at Well-Woman hope you feel satisfied with the work you do for exams and papers and we wish you an enjoyable and very happy new millennium.



Winter Break is Coming!!

Yes, it's that time again. In this issue of the Well-Woman Newsletter, we've included articles about issues that are important to Barnard Women during the stressful holiday season, and winter break.

Read about beating the winter blues, surviving the millennium madness, adjusting to being "home for the break," and tips on exercising in winter weather.

Well-Woman wishes you a joyful holiday season.

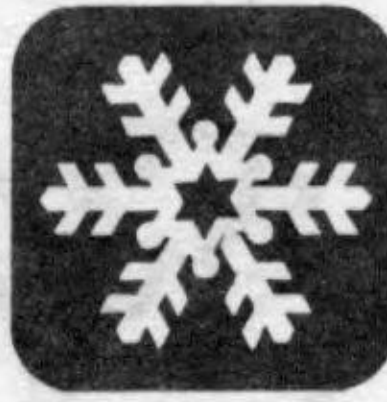
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FEELING SAD?- Understanding Seasonal Affective Disorder

By Emma Barnstable

As the weather gets colder and the days grow shorter, you may start to notice that your roommate oversleeps more than usual, or that your suite mates seem a little down. You may notice that you crave bagels, pasta and pizza a little more than normal. None of these things are of grave concern but they could be symptoms of SAD, or Seasonal Affective Disorder.



In the winter we tend to spend less time outdoors and therefore get less exposure to sunlight. The days get shorter and many of us get out of class at the end of the day to find that the sun is practically gone and dusk is upon us. Lack of sunlight can cause fatigue, increased sleep, carbohydrate cravings or increased appetite, weight gain and depressed mood. Not every one gets SAD and those who do experience it with varying degrees of severity. The difference between SAD and other affective disorders, like a major depressive episode, is that there is a specific cause- reduced sunlight.

If you feel like you cannot function due to depression and fatigue you should contact health services to get a professional opinion. If you feel like you just get a bit down in the winter, then try taking a 20 minute walk in the afternoon or eating your lunch outside. If you can't stand the cold, there are light boxes on the market that use full spectrum fluorescent lights to simulate sunlight. You sit in front of the light for 20-30 minutes and your body reacts as if you've been in the sun. Light boxes can cost several hundred dollars, so try going for 20 minute walks before buying one. Check out the following websites for more information- www.sunalite.com, www.ronan.net/~mmlight/, and feminist.com/ltp.htm.

If you have questions or concerns about SAD, contact Health Services at 4-2091 or the Well-Woman Office at 4-3063.

Home For the Holidays- Joy or Stress?

Watching television, one would think that the holidays are filled with love and joy. However, this is not the whole picture. For many, the holidays are a time of loneliness, isolation, sadness, and frustration. In addition to the stress that holidays can bring- more to do, expensive gifts to buy, finals- the coming of winter and high expectations can be a recipe for disappointment. We are bombarded by the media to *buy, buy, buy*. Some say the holidays have lost their meaning.

A recent *NY Times* article addresses the confusion some feel around the holidays. It is a time of very high expectations to have the *perfect* outfit, the *perfect* gift, the *perfect* family. Anyone who has gone home for a holiday break expecting that their families will have changed, or that *this year will be the best holiday*, and found his/her sibling is still annoying, or that his/her parents still fight, knows this disappointment.

Counselors recognize that the holidays can be difficult for many people. Some people are separated

from their families, and others (especially students) find it hard to adjust to being at home again.



Although the Holidays are known for joy and happiness, many feel stressed with too many demands and unrealistic expectations.

Some ways to help ease holiday stress are to examine what your expectations are and make them more realistic. Chances are, your family is still the same as they've always been. Communicating your feelings and wishes can ease stress. Being with others can help decrease isolation. If you can't see your family this year, go to a friend's celebration. Being with people you care about and who make you feel loved can help holiday blues. Also, volunteering at a hospital or soup kitchen and giving to others can bring meaning to your holiday season.

Winter Exercise

At Well-Woman, we understand that exercising in the winter can be difficult, to say the least. Holiday parties, final exams, going home, the cold weather, and TOO MUCH TO DO, all contribute to the feeling that we just can't exercise. However, this doesn't have to be the case! Exercise can help increase energy, improve sleep quality, regulate appetite, and improve general well-being, which is so important in winter. Little daylight and cold temperatures can make us feel very sluggish.

Here are some ideas to beat the winter blues and feel better!

**Sign Up for Dance Class in the Spring through the PHYS ED Department.*

**Go for a lunchtime walk with a friend. Bundle up and wear shoes with good traction.*

**Buy a Yoga video to do in your room.*

**If you exercise outdoors (i.e. running or walking) do so during daylight hours so as to avoid traffic and hidden icy sidewalks.*

**Get motivated to stretch more, and do exercises such as push-ups, crunches, lunges, and plies.*

These exercises help us feel energized and require little space or equipment.

**Most importantly, be easy on yourself. We all do less activity during the winter. Do what you can and be moderate. It only takes 20 minutes a day to feel the benefits of exercise.*



**Well-Woman Wishes
You a Happy,
Healthy 2000**

SAFER Update

Well-Woman received some updates from SAFER (Students Active For Ending Rape) that we'd like to pass along.

Please join SAFER in their efforts to educate the community about sexual assault and policy reform by attending their weekly meetings on **Mondays, at 9:30 p.m. in the Women's Collective (1st Floor of Hewitt.)*

**Currently, SAFER is working with other campus groups to write up recommendations for the University Senate's Task Force's new proposal.*

**SAFER will continue to educate the community about the politics surrounding the sexual misconduct policy.*

SAFER wants your help. Please email them with questions, ideas, suggestions, or comments at **safer_cu@hotmail.com.*

Check out their informative website at **www.columbia.edu/cu/safer*

The Well-Woman Newsletter is produced by the Well-Woman Peer Educators and Health Promotion Program at Barnard College.

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