

Wednesday, 12 November 2014

### **'Winter Blues' Cases Set to Surge, Say Counsellors**

The Irish Association of Counselling & Psychotherapy (IACP) has said the arrival of winter will lead to an upsurge in cases of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).

However, the IACP, which represents almost 4,000 accredited counsellors and psychotherapists across Ireland, said that it is possible for sufferers of SAD to successfully treat the disorder by making some simple lifestyle changes.

The disorder, also known as the 'winter blues', is a type of depression that is directly related to changes in the seasons. It is caused by a decrease in sunlight which can disrupt the body's internal clock and lead to feelings of tiredness, irritability and sometimes depression. Decreased sunlight levels can also trigger a fall in serotonin levels.

Serotonin is a chemical in the brain that affects moods and reduced levels can lead to people suffering from the winter blues, according to the IACP.

The other symptoms of SAD include lower energy levels; oversleeping, a tendency to put on weight and a propensity to consume foods that are high in carbohydrates.

Shane Kelly, Professional Services Manager with the IACP said: "The good news for anyone who suffers from SAD is that you can tackle it by making some simple lifestyle changes.

"Exercise will help overcome stress and anxiety and lift your mood. It's also important for those with SAD to eat a healthy diet – with an emphasis on fresh vegetables and fruit.

Mr Kelly advised that people who are prone to feeling down during the winter months should be conscious of the time that they spend indoors as a lack of natural light is not beneficial to SAD sufferers.

"If you don't have the time to exercise during the working week, then taking a short walk during lunchtime is also effective. The temperature may have dropped but, there is still enough natural light and fresh air to have a positive effect on your mood," Mr Kelly said.

He added that it was important for SAD sufferers to socialise and meet with friends and relatives and not to isolate themselves over the winter months.

"If these feelings persist, it's important to talk to a friend or relative. Failing that, you should seek professional advice and your GP can discuss treatment options such as medication, counselling or psychotherapy. Most importantly, don't suffer in silence over the long winter months," Mr Kelly added.

Separately, the IACP is hosting a free public talk on understanding the psychology of suicide. Taking place on Thursday, November 27<sup>th</sup> at 7pm in the Davenport Hotel, Dublin, leading psychologist Dr Eoin Galavan will explain what happens in the suicidal mind and how we can understand the psychology behind suicide.

The talk is free, but advance booking is highly recommended. To book your free place, log on to [www.iacp.ie](http://www.iacp.ie)

**ENDS**

**Shane Kelly is available for interview. For more information, contact Richard Brophy, OHC, on 086-385 3260 / 01-660 2744 or email [rbrophy@ohcpr.ie](mailto:rbrophy@ohcpr.ie)**

#### About the IACP

Established in 1981, the IACP identifies, develops and maintains professional standards of excellence in counselling and psychotherapy through education, training and accreditation. In promoting best practice and the professional development of its members, IACP holds at its core the protection of the public. Representing both the interests of clients and practitioners (over 3,500 nationwide), IACP provides a telephone referral helpline, an information service; and an online counsellor / psychotherapist / supervisor directory. IACP is a registered Charity (CHY 6615).

More information is available from the IACP's website [www.iacp.ie](http://www.iacp.ie).