

SPRING CAN SHAPE MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH IN A VARIETY OF WAYS

BY TONISHA MELVIN

Have you ever noticed that in spring, you often feel more energetic and cheerful? This is the time of year when you might feel motivated to clean any dust that's accumulated throughout the winter and change out the dark-colored linen with brighter colors in your house.

Where does this boost of energy and happiness come from? It may be because this is the time of year that comes after a dark and cold season. Springtime allows us to be outside enjoying the warm sun, which helps to increase our vitamin D and serotonin levels from the pineal gland. They can both help boost our mood and make us feel more lively and active outdoors. Our bodies need serotonin to adequately function daily. It is a chemical neurotransmitter, also called 5-hydroxytryptamine (5-HT), that is found in the bowels, brain, and blood, and it sends messages between cells to help to regulate digestion, emotions, appetite, and mood.

Spring is also the time of year when time springs forward to alter our circadian rhythm, which can improve our sleep habits. When we are more

active and able to get out more in the spring, we also release endorphins that can give us a euphoric feeling of happiness. Endorphins can be released in a number of ways, such as running, walking, dancing, meditating, laughing, cuddling, or enjoying your favorite meal.

The change in weather can benefit us all. In fact, one study showed that spending more time outdoors and actively engaging in sports activities, exercise, or other outdoor hobbies like gardening improves mood and memory.

If you are in therapy, ever participated in therapy, or have been thinking about therapy, you will find that a vital part of being in therapy is helping you be accountable for your physical health, which can help your mental health, too.

Spring offers great opportunities to help boost our mood. Even so, it's not a cure-all, and some people might need additional help in managing depression.

If you're feeling overwhelmed, I encourage you to seek help from a professional today.



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