



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Beat the Winter Doldrums

“Snow day!” As a child, those words were unlike any other in their ability to wake me up, ignite my imagination, and spark my desire to get out into the frozen tundra of the New Jersey shore. Phone calls with my friends would start flying early. Plans would be made for great adventures. Snow pants and sweaters and boots and wool socks. Early morning into the evening spent running, sledding, playing ice hockey (in sneakers, of course), building forts, and so much more. I am breathless just thinking back to those early snow days with wonder and awe.

Now, those same words—“snow day”—fill me with more dread than wonder. Will we have to close the building? What about our employees? Who needs to be notified? How long will we be affected? Will the storm cause us to lose power? Who needs to be cared for? What else needs to be done? All of this before 6:00 a.m. so as to give time to carry out our snow day protocol. Then it’s time to shovel the driveway, clear off the cars, and make sure the dog has a place to do her business outside. Now, in the day of laptops and cell phones, snow days don’t mean a day filled with forts and sleds—but just another day at the office (granted, the home office). No thank you!

For some, the “winter doldrums” pose a greater threat than simple boredom or gloominess. Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a form of depression that cycles with the seasons and is known to affect more than 5% of all older adults. Declining daylight impacts circadian rhythms and causes hormonal changes leading to depressive symptoms in people affected by SAD. Added to the shorter daylight hours, cold weather and icy conditions force people to stay home and contribute to social isolation.

Before highlighting some of the means to fend off seasonal affective disorder (SAD), it is important to note the importance of regular communication with your doctor and mental health professionals. It is always acceptable—and encouraged—to reach out to your medical team

if you are experiencing signs and symptoms of depression.

One of the primary means to combat SAD is to soak up as much sunlight as possible. Researchers from the National Institute of Health indicate that a mere ten minutes a day of sunlight, whenever possible, has a significant impact on seasonal depression. Other means suggested by ComfortKeepers to help older adults elevate their mood and fend off the effects of seasonal depression include:

- Open curtains and blinds, allowing as much daylight as possible. Simply sitting near a window can help.
- Spend time outdoors every day, as safety permits. Even on dreary days the effect of daylight can be beneficial.
- Find companionship. Take a new class. Meet friends for brunch. Staying involved in social activities helps to prevent feelings of isolation and loneliness.
- Eat a well-balanced diet that provides recommended amounts of vitamins and minerals needed to maintain energy.
- Get physical activity for at least thirty minutes a day, three times per week.

Here at the Princeton Senior Resource Center, we are committed to helping you stay active and engaged during the winter months! January is the perfect time to start taking one of our art classes to engage your creative spirit. We also offer winter exercise classes, including gentle mat yoga, chair exercise, and aerobics (in partnership with the municipal recreation department). FYI Seminars are great opportunities to meet others and engage with experts in various important topics. On January 13, we are pleased to welcome Cathy Chabala and Sheli Monacchio who will talk about the benefits of socialization.

January also offers exciting seasonal offerings, including “Gallery Talks on the Road.” This program, offered in conjunction with the Princeton University Art Museum, explores the richness and

complexities of the world of art with the help of an extraordinary group of museum docents. A winter opera film festival is offered on Tuesday afternoons. There are plenty of other programs highlighted throughout this newsletter to keep you active and engaged through the winter months.

Grab your mittens. Put on a hat. Lace up your boots. And head to PSRC for exercise, learning, art, conversation, and so much more. I look forward to sharing a snowy day with you!

All the Best,

Drew A. Dyson, PhD, Executive Director

By the way, any "snow day" information about PSRC closings will be posted on our website, a message will be placed on our phone system, and emails will go out to participants who are registered in any affected program.