**Dark Days, Dark Mood**

Vocabulary

**Mood –** feelings right now; attitude

**sluggish** – slow and tired; you don’t want to do anything

**symptoms** – things your body or mind do when you’re body or mind is injure or sick

**anxiety** – worry; fear

**hormones** – natural chemicals our bodies produce when we have feelings, but can cause problems when they are not balanced (too little or too much)

**onset** – time when something new/different starts

**cope** – try to adjust to or fix a problem we know we’re having

**layers** – (of clothes), for example, a t-shirt, sweater, and jacket = 3 layers

**cozy** – warm; safe; comfortable

As summer turns to fall and fall turns to winter, things change. The summer colors fade, and the temperature drops. Days get shorter and night comes earlier. There are also more clouds and less sunshine. These changes can cause some people to feel more **sluggish**.  Others find it difficult to focus on their work. Some feel sad, but don’t know why. This seasonal change in mood and behavior is known as *seasonal affective disorder* (SAD).

This mood (or feelings) disorder is a type of depression that is related to seasonal variations of light. People with SAD have a difficult time adjusting to the shortage of

sunlight in the winter months. **Symptoms** of SAD include:  depression, fatigue or loss of energy, overeating, **anxiety**, and difficulty concentrating.

Researchers say that about 25% of people who live in northern states have the

“winter blues.”  This milder form of SAD can make a person feel less cheerful, creative,

and energetic during the dark days of winter.

Melatonin is a sleep related **hormone** that has been linked to SAD. This hormone

is believed to cause symptoms of depression and is produced at increased levels in the dark. So, when the days are shorter and darker, the production of this hormone increases. Young people and women are at the highest risk for SAD, but it can affect anyone. The

main age of **onset** is between 18 and 30. It usually decreases around the age of 50.

How can people **cope** with the winter blues?  Changing the environment can help. Remove the curtains and shades and let the natural light shine in! Paint the walls a brighter color. Install brighter light bulbs. Taking care of yourself can help, too. Stay warm by wearing **layers**. Stay healthy by washing your hands a lot, exercising, and eating healthy food. Wrap-up in a **cozy** blanket and enjoy a warm cup of tea or hot chocolate. These coping behaviors will keep your mood up when the dark days try to pull it down.

1. What is the main idea of this reading?

2. “Go outside on days that are not very cold to get some natural sunlight and fresh air.” This detail supports what part of the reading?

3. What is the purpose of this article?

4. When \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?

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7. Why \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?

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