

# CHANGING MENTAL HEALTH AND CHANGING SEASONS



## Grade 4 Changing Mental Health and Changing Seasons Science & Visual Art

### Purpose of the Lesson:

The changing of the seasons can greatly impact people's moods and mental health. Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is defined as "a type of depression that's related to changes in seasons — SAD begins and ends at about the same times every year. If you're like most people with SAD, your symptoms start in the fall and continue into the winter months, sapping your energy and making you feel moody" (Mayo Clinic). Understanding how the change of seasons can impact mood is a great way for students to learn more about their own mental health and wellbeing. Through this lesson, students will be creating visual representations of the change of seasons and will reflect on how the seasons changing can impact their mood. They will also brainstorm ways of supporting their mental health through the darker winter months as a way to combat potential mood shifts associated with the dark and the cold.

### Curriculum Competencies:

#### Science

- Demonstrate curiosity about the natural world
- Observe objects and events in familiar contexts
- Identify questions about familiar objects and events that can be investigated scientifically
- Make predictions based on prior knowledge
- Experience and interpret the local environment
- Sort and classify data and information using drawings or provided tables

#### Visual Arts

- Choose artistic elements, processes, materials, movements, technologies, tools, techniques and environments using combinations and selections for specific purposes in art making
- Explore identity, place, culture, and belonging through arts experiences
- Express, feelings, ideas, and experiences in creative ways

#### First Peoples Principles of Learning:

- Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).
- Learning involves recognizing the consequences of one's actions.

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## Video

[Why Do We Get the Winter Blues? | Seasonal Affective Disorder - SciShow Psych](#)

### Guiding Questions:

1. What are some of the reasons people can feel sadder or more depressed in the winter months?
2. Do you notice your mood shifting in the fall and/or winter?
3. Have you observed feelings of happiness when spring returns?
4. How do changes in mental health through the seasons reflect changes of mental health that happen regularly?

## Step-by-Step Lesson

**Preparation:** Queue up video/set up projector

**1. Have the students watch the video “Why Do We Get the Winter Blues?”** This video can be found [HERE](#).

**2. Pause the video and use the Guiding Questions to spark discussion.**

**3. Discuss with your students how our mental health is constantly changing.** Explain to your students that changes in mental health are completely common. Our mental health can change throughout the course of a day or throughout the week and can ebb and flow throughout the months and years. Changes in mental health can impact us in positive and negative ways. Sometimes our mental health changes because of internal factors. These changes can happen because of mood disorders, patterns of thinking, mental health issues, and a variety of other reasons. Changes in mental health can also occur for external reasons. These can include stress around school, challenges with family or friends, the loss of a loved one, and the changing of seasons.

**4. Have your students reflect on the way the seasons impact their mood.** Break your students up into groups and have them reflect on the ways their mood can shift when the seasons change. These can be in either positive or negative ways.

**5. Facilitate a whole class discussion about this topic.** Once your students have had time to share with each other, discuss their musings with the larger group. Write things down on the board to anchor the conversation and ensure that you can track their discussion.

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## Step-by-Step Lesson

**6. Explore with your students why trees change colour throughout the year.** There are scientific reasons why trees change colour and lose their leaves as fall and winter months approach. These changes can sometimes mimic our mental health changes. As fall and winter approach, our mood can drop and the joyful, sunny feelings we've experienced in spring and summer can be replaced by feelings of sadness.

- a. Have your students make predictions about what makes the trees change colour, and have them test their predictions through online research.

**7. Explain the curriculum connections to your students.** Inform them that they will be creating visual art pieces that represent how the seasons change and how their moods and mental health change throughout the year, just like the seasons. They can represent this in any creative way they choose. Depending on the time of year, you can encourage them or take them to go out into nature to gather natural materials that they can use to decorate the trees they design. Inform them that they can use various colours to indicate the different moods they have in different seasons. They can use any materials or art mediums you have available to you in the classroom.

### **Accommodations/modifications:**

If students are visually impaired, you can get them to explain to you how they would represent the changing of the seasons.

**8. Get the students to share their art pieces with each other.** Have your students create a gallery in the class by posting the artwork around the classroom and having your students observe each other's work. This way they can explore each other's creations.

**9. Have your students brainstorm ways they can support their mental health through the changes of the seasons.** Split your class up into groups. These can be the same groups or different groups from before. Have them reflect on and brainstorm ways they can ensure that they maintain positive mental health for as much of the cold months as possible. It can be harder to find things to do during the winter to stay mentally well, when going outside and seeing people becomes more challenging. Use this time as a way to prepare your students to maintain good mental wellness ahead of time.