

MENTAL HEALTH MINUTE

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Daylight Saving Time's Impact on the Brain

Most of the United States alternates between standard and daylight saving time (DST) every year so people can enjoy the daylight more. Clocks will be set back an hour on Sunday, Nov. 5, when DST ends, giving you an extra hour in your day. Although you may be excited about gaining an hour, DST can negatively impact your mental health and cognitive function.

The time change of DST can disrupt your body's circadian rhythm—the 24-hour biological cycle that regulates sleep, mood and appetite. As a result, many people struggle to adapt their sleeping schedule to the new time. It can take days or even a week to adjust to your new schedule, which can cause sleep deprivation.

Disrupted sleep can cause you to feel groggy, irritable and unfocused. It can also exacerbate existing mental health conditions, such as anxiety, depression, seasonal affective disorder, substance abuse and suicidal thoughts.

Adjusting to DST

You can prepare your mind and body for DST by altering your sleep time a few days before the clocks change. For example,

you can adjust your wake-up time by fifteen minutes each day or postpone morning tasks for fifteen minutes to prepare your body for the adjustment.

After the time change, you can help recover lost sleep with extra naps during the afternoon. Additionally, you can use the change to evaluate your sleep hygiene. Remember that using technology (e.g., phones and TV) right before bed can cause difficulty falling asleep and reduce rapid eye movement (REM) cycles. Try reading a book, relaxing or meditating before bed to help yourself fall asleep.

You can also improve your sleep quality by exercising during the day. This will tire your body and help you adjust to an altered sleep schedule.

Conclusion

Helping your body prepare for the end of DST can reduce its impact on your sleep, mood and fatigue levels. Use the healthy tips in this article to reduce the impact of DST on your sleep schedule.

The Benefits of Meditation for Anxiety

According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, anxiety affects 19% of American adults every year, making anxiety disorders the most common mental illness in the United States.

Meditation has been proven to help improve mental health conditions, such as anxiety and depression. A recent study published by JAMA Psychiatry found that meditation may be as effective as medication for managing long-term anxiety symptoms for some people.

How Does Meditation Help with Anxiety?

Meditation involves focusing your attention on the present and reducing the flow of thoughts in your mind. As a result, it can help you reduce negative feelings and social anxiety symptoms, as well as help you accept your anxious thoughts and feelings. Studies have shown that meditation can also reduce chronic stress, emotional exhaustion and insomnia.

Meditating for Beginners

If you're new to meditation, one of the best places to begin

is by focusing on being present in the moment. You can start by focusing on your body or breathing for 15 minutes at a time. Try this while walking, eating or relaxing on the couch.

You can also try mantra meditation, which involves focusing on a specific thought or phrase. To do this, find a comfortable place to sit where you'll repeat your mantra to yourself, redirecting your thoughts if they begin to wander.

Guided imagery meditation is another good practice for people who have anxiety. It involves visualizing a place, sound or object you find relaxing and focusing on it while your body unwinds. You may consider using a guided imagery video or app to help you begin.

Conclusion

Anxiety is extremely common in the United States. If you suffer from anxiety or anxious thoughts, meditation may help. Try one of the practices listed here or consult a medical health care professional for further information.