

"Blue Monday": More People Seek Counselling In Dead Of Winter

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Julie Dzuba of Envision Counselling.

The science behind "Blue Monday", which is supposedly the most depressing day of the year, has been called into question over the years. What's beyond question, however, is that changing seasons do affect people's mental health, and today is a long way into winter with a good chunk of that season still to go.

Whether Blue Monday is a real phenomenon or not, Envision Counselling and Support Centre sees more people in need of their services this time of year. There are a lot of factors in this, ranging from the weather to economics.

"I think that it is definitely a time where people are a little bit more aware of things starting to compound throughout the year," said outreach coordinator Julie Dzuba. "You've just finished with Christmas and things like that, and things kind of start to build up. I think people are probably a little bit more aware of how they're feeling at this point in time."

Of course, the discussion around Blue Monday hasn't yet taken into account the effects of COVID-19, which has impacted mental health as well as just about every other facet of life. This year in particular, Envision is seeing more calls than they typically would even this time of year.

"The pandemic, being alone and more isolated, all of these things do really impact someone's mental health and wellbeing," Dzuba said. "We are noticing that all of these factors kind of combined do increase people's willingness to reach out at this time."

The advice and help Envision offers depends on the client in question, but there are some general tips for keeping on top of your mental health in this or any other time of year. A willingness to reach out, and not just to professional counsellors, can be hugely helpful.

"It's important to kind of check in with yourself," said Dzuba, "and just be aware of how your body is reacting to different things. If you do feel like you are feeling a little bit more down than usual, reach out as best you can to family or friends. Tell people what it is you're experiencing. A lot of times we try to handle these things on our own."

Dzuba added that walk-in counselling is still an option in Weyburn on Tuesdays and Friday and in Estevan on Wednesdays and Thursdays, both at the Salvation Army. They also offer walk-in counselling in Oxbow at Nobel HSSE on the second and fourth Monday of every month.