



These things are normal when you have

SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder)

Sleep problems

Loss of libido

Overeating

Lethargy

Anxiety

Feeling low & sad

Suicidal thoughts

Depression

Irritability

Hopelessness





and these also ...





The Very Real Experience of SAD – Seasonal Affective Disorder

SAD is a form of depression that ebbs and flows as the seasons change. SAD is sometimes referred to as “winter depression” because the symptoms tend to be more conspicuous and amplified during autumn and winter months.

Seasonal

With the change in season comes a natural necessity to physically and mentally adapt our lifestyles. We think nothing of turning on the heating and getting out warmer clothes, so why do we give little consideration to mental adjustments? From September until April we expect the days to get shorter and the nights to draw in during the autumn and winter months. This results in a reduction in daytime light and consequently, our brains instinctively encourage the production of melatonin - a hormone that induces sleep.

Affective

Lethargy, low energy levels, reduction in social interaction and reduced sex drive are key factors of SAD. Our mood is persistently low, joy has disappeared and pleasure and interest in normal day to day activities defeats us. It is not unusual to feel irritable, guilty, despair, tearful, worthless, stressed and anxious. We tend to sleep longer and have difficulty getting out of bed. Craving carbohydrate foods and weight gain are common symptoms of SAD.

Disorder

Considering all these possible symptoms, day to day life feels disordered and not what we would want it to be. Engaging in everyday tasks can be a struggle and we lose a sense of control over our lives. Hardly, surprising that quite a number of us feel a desire to hibernate.

Causes

As yet we still do not fully understand SAD, but we do know that SAD can run in families. The reduction in exposure to sunlight is a contributing factor. It is believed that the lack of sunlight stops the hypothalamus in our brains working effectively and consequently this could affect the normal level of melatonin (a hormone that makes us feel sleepy) in our bodies.



Serotonin is a hormone that affects our mood, sleep and appetite. The lack of sunlight during Autumn and Winter may lead to a lowering of serotonin levels and then depression could slip into daily life. We all have an inbuilt wake/sleep system and when the seasons change and the clocks are altered this can throw this wake/sleep system. The limited sunlight has the capacity to disrupt our body clocks and throw us off balance for a while.

Tips on how to alleviate the symptoms of SAD

Create a home and work environment that has plenty of natural light

GRAB AS MUCH NATURAL LIGHT AS YOU CAN EACH DAY

Eat a HEALTHY balance diet and DRINK plenty of Water.

Talk to family and friends about your symptoms

Exercise regularly

Position your chair next to a window as often as you can

Avoid stressful situations when possible

Do things that you enjoy

Visit your GP if things get tough. Check your Vitamin D levels

Try light therapy

Counselling

Above all else - be kind and be gentle to yourself.

Remember this will pass and spring will soon be upon us again.



Useful links

https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/seasonal-affective-disorder-sad/about-sad/?gclid=EAlalQobChMIge2Gh4PQ5AIVxbHtCh2YgAfMEAAAYASAAEgLdUvD_BwE#.XXy2Ey_hKjIU

MIND PODCAST <https://audioboom.com/posts/5066543-seasonal-affective-disorder-sad-sarah-s-story>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/seasonal-affective-disorder-sad/>

www.sad.org.uk

<https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/anxiety-type/sad/>

Counselling links

<https://www.bacp.co.uk/search/Therapists>

<https://www.psychotherapy.org.uk/>

https://www.counselling-directory.org.uk/?gclid=EAlalQobChMI_ozrkJbQ5AIVQ7DtCh2ldgMjEAAYASAAEgJgi_D_BwE