

"The Winter Blues" – stay on top when the season is against you

Last Modified on 01/16/2019 6:21 am EST



I was reading this article from The Freelancer blog about [Seasonal Affective Disorder \(SAD\)](#). The author talks about SAD as a mood disorder, because when you suffer from SAD it means you have chronically low mood during the winter months.

According to [Mind](#) mental health charity:

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is a form of depression that people experience at a particular time of year or during a particular season. It is a recognised mental health disorder.

As a long-time sufferer of SAD, I was prompted to think of this condition as a mood disorder and wonder whether this is true. It's something that seems to get worse with the years, although maybe I'm just more aware of it as I get older.

It's definitely not fun to suffer from "low mood". You do feel depressed, demotivated, lonely, and literally "sad". No one likes to feel that way, and it's not normal to feel like that most of the time – unless something very bad has happened. Maybe some people get SAD a lot worse than others, and I've definitely *been there*.

It goes without saying that if you feel seriously depressed you should get some help, maybe from friends, family or doctor. Easier said than done.

What's wrong with being SAD?

But then I started to wonder if we should really medicalise SAD as a mood disorder? This idea seems to suggest that there is something wrong with feeling sad, when if it is really as common as potentially 20% of the population then maybe SAD is perfectly normal. The days in winter are short and dark, it's cold, and the trees are bare – at least in northern Europe where I live.

Maybe over-focusing on SAD as a mood disorder shows how we only want to have states of mind where we feel productive. It's hard to be productive when you feel lonely and depressed. The article states some well-known remedies for SAD (like light therapy) which do seem to work.

I was most obsessed with having SAD when I was trying to find a reason for why I felt the way that I did. Maybe the reason was that I had just gone freelance, I had moved away from my home, and I was doing very stressful things that left me feeling burnt out and depressed. SAD just brought it to my attention.

How to cope with SAD

Maybe instead of forcing our bodies to comply with our wishes, we should build our lives around our body's needs. Productivity is important, but not as an end in itself. You should be as productive as you need to be to get what you want, and screw the rest.

As a freelancer, maybe you should intentionally lighten the workload in winter. Work harder in summer and then save the money away for the darker months.

So take care of yourself, but maybe also don't be so hard on yourself. We can't be at 100% productivity all the time, and as a freelancer you *should* have the luxury to build a schedule in your life that fits your needs. Do you really need to earn that extra money, or is the toll on your mental health and wellbeing not worth it?

I also have a suspicion that maybe SAD doesn't create those low feelings. Maybe they are often there, just outside of my awareness, and my constant busyness allows me to just ignore them. Maybe having less energy to pursue a manic lifestyle finally brings my attention back to those feelings, and maybe winter is a time to work through them.

The seasonal cycle

Like the cycle of nature when seeds are dormant during the winter months, maybe we should go dormant during this time. It's a time to gather more energy and be refreshed, ready to grow in the spring.

In [scottish folklore](#) , Beira is the goddess of winter. Beira has one eye, symbolising her ability to see beyond duality. This means she can see the oneness behind all things. If a hero can fall in love with her (she is a hag) then she will transform into a beautiful maiden, which symbolises the dormant seeds in the earth that will flower in spring. In some versions, Beira is the goddess of death and rebirth.



Folk tales are not going to pass any feminist tests, but this story illustrates how winter can symbolise the sleep that all of us need, mentally, emotionally and physically – ready to be reborn in the spring. We shouldn't panic so much about SAD and how we can't be as productive as we would like. We should listen to what our bodies tell us.

Published: Saturday 15 December

Main image: Photo by [Andre Benz](#) on [Unsplash](#)



By Catherine Heath. *I'm a community builder for creative and ethical companies. I offer freelance writing services including blogs, copy and documentation. [Find out how we can work together !](#)*
