

Living with Seasonal Affective Disorder



Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is a form of depression that people experience at a particular time of year, particularly in the winter months.

If you experience SAD, you may find that the changing seasons have an effect on your mood and energy levels, which can have a significant impact on your day-to-day life.

Kim from Southampton shares her experience of SAD and how she manages her symptoms through the winter months.

“I’ve always suffered with winter blues and struggled as days got shorter, but a few years ago I found it was worse than before. I struggled to get out of bed but also found it hard to sleep, and I had no motivation or energy to do anything. I felt like I was disconnected... simply “meh” all the time.

My family encouraged me to visit my GP, who told me about SADs. For some people, these symptoms can be severe, and have a significant impact on their day-to-day activities. For me it’s like an endless grey, not just in the weather but also emotionally, and sometimes it’s hard to remember what an easy day feels like.

Although medication helps many people to manage the symptoms of SAD, I found that talking it through really helped. I self-referred to italk, Solent Mind and Southern Health’s free talking therapy service, and started chatting through their online service Silvercloud soon after.

I also developed some self-help strategies to help me manage how I felt. I stuck to a daily routine where possible and wrote down daily to-do lists which allowed me to organise my time.

This meant I could sleep better knowing what was coming up and prioritise tasks for the mornings when I had the most energy.

For me, SAD isn’t going to simply ‘go away’, but I am always eager to find and try out new ways to help me cope.

Here’s some things I’ve found useful:

- I’m gentle with myself. I don’t expect to complete my to do list and I know I can adapt my routine as needed.
- I keep my curtains closed on gloomy day and **use lights** (I love fairy lights!) to help distract me from the weather outside.
- I’ve built a **good support network** of people that I know I can go to and they’ll help me as much as they can. I also value some quality time with my pets!
- I **make the most of any sunshine** by opening the curtains and **getting out and about**.
- I open the windows – getting some **fresh air** makes me feel less claustrophobic and weighed down.
- I **try mindful exercises**, like listening to the rain when trying to sleep or relax.
- When everything out of the window looks really dull and colourless, I keep a selection of **cacti and succulents** in my room to add a splash of green all year round.”



If you would like to find out more about italk or self-refer to their talking therapies, talk a look at www.italk.org.uk or call 023 8038 3920.