

Overcoming the Winter Blahs...

Naturally



By Kathy Wilson, CPC

Introduction

“The Winter Blahs” are known in medical circles as Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). Whether it was deliberate or a coincident, the acronym for this disorder couldn’t be more perfect. The symptoms of this disorder are many, but the most common is depression.

While there are many symptoms, the cause is only one – lack of sunlight.

For most of my adult life I’ve suffered from most, if not all, of the symptoms of SAD.

I’ve lived in what locals call “the wet side” of Washington state almost all of my life. I grew up in a town that receives about 35 inches of rain annually and my memory of it is that it was perpetually gloomy.

It wouldn’t surprise me to learn that a major portion of people living in Western Washington suffer from the Winter Blahs. It might surprise *them* however. When everyone is doing and feeling the same it’s called “normal”. However, when compared to people who live in the sunnier climes, what we were experiencing was anything but normal.

When I had the opportunity to travel to California or Hawaii I couldn’t help but notice how much happier and energetic everyone seemed to be. While I was in those locales I found my own energy increasing and I noticed that I felt happier. At the time I attributed it to being on vacation. Only later did I discover the surprising truth.

There were clues that led me to the realization that I was suffering from some kind of repetitive disorder, but they were random and often difficult to connect with anything. One thing was predictable: in the winter, the same symptoms would appear. Each year I found myself exhibiting behaviors in the winter that I didn’t in the summer, such as:

- an overwhelming desire to hang out in the brightly-lit shopping malls in the winter. I was drawn like a moth to a light bulb.
- the overpowering desire to sleep 10 to 12 hours a day in the winter. I would jokingly say that I was hibernating.
- a craving for popcorn, potato chips, bread, and other sources of carbohydrates.
- catching several colds and the flu each winter.
- general, overall lack of energy. I’d sit in front of the TV watching old movies or play Solitaire on my computer for hours.

When clumped together, all these clues pointed to one thing: Seasonal Affective Disorder.

The last few years as I've searched for relief from SAD I've discovered many simple and inexpensive methods that help reduce, and in some cases completely eliminate, the symptoms of the Winter Blahs. I shared these methods with many of my friends whom I saw suffering with SAD and was delighted to see them enjoy relief. This led to me using the knowledge I'd gained to teach classes to others who suffered from this malady.

While the classes helped many, I wanted to reach as many people as possible with the information that could help them overcome SAD. My goal in writing this e-book is to share this information with as many people as possible in order to lift them from the burden of suffering the Winter Blahs.

**Don't let another winter knock you down.
Overcome the Winter Blahs naturally!**

Disclaimer: The information provided within these pages is not intended to replace professional medical care.

Chapter 1

What is SAD?

Seasonal Affective Disorder is caused by only one thing: the lack of sunlight.

Typically it affects people in northern latitudes and especially in the winter. However, SAD can affect you at other times of the year. Even cloudy days during midsummer can trigger the symptoms, especially lack of energy and increased depression.

You can even be affected by it if you live in an area with lots of sun. People who live in places like Southern California, Arizona, and Australia often avoid the sun because of the heat and skin cancer concerns. They also wear sunglasses more often than those who live in the northern latitudes. These lifestyle habits are actually simulating the dark and gloom of winter and contribute to thousands of people who are unknowingly suffering from SAD.

Over 80% of women suffer from some, if not all, of the symptoms of SAD. As women move toward the age of menopause the symptoms become even more evident. Men seem to not experience it as much as women, probably because they're outdoors more. But a goodly percentage of them suffer from SAD too.

The most common symptoms that people experience are:

- depression
- sleeping problems including disturbed sleep patterns
- craving for carbohydrates, sugar, and alcohol
- weight gain (must be all those carbs!)
- lowered immunity to illness
- mood swings

Fortunately, we now know that there is such a thing as SAD – it's not just something in your head or your imagination.

Even better, there are protocols that can be easily and inexpensively implemented to relieve the symptoms of SAD. Protocols that don't include expensive and extended trips to a tropical climate or taking dangerous and addictive anti-depressants.

Chapter 2

How Technology Created SAD

Back in the Olden Days, people lived in harmony with natural rhythms. They awoke when the sun came up, worked during the daylight, and when the sun went down, so did they. In the summer they worked harder and longer than during the winter.

People in those days were in synch with the times of day and the seasons. They used them as guidance for the levels of activity they performed:

- Dawn/Spring = Energy is rising but not yet up to full power. This is the time to begin ramping up in preparation for the high energy work coming.
- Day/Summer = Energy is high. This time is for working the hardest and longest.
- Evening/Fall = Energy is waning. This time is to slow down and prepare for rest.
- Night/Winter = Energy is at its lowest point. This is the time to rest.

With the invention of artificial lighting our world changed. No longer were we confined to only daylight hours in which we could work. Artificial light provided us with the means to work longer hours, produce more, and potentially make more money.

Nobody could have guessed at the enormity of problems that would later appear because of this wonderful new invention.

We began to work longer hours and sometimes unnatural hours, such as swing and graveyard shifts at factories and mills. No longer did we work in synch with the natural rhythm of the waxing and waning light of the seasons as we used to - working harder and longer during the summer and resting more during winter.

While the invention of artificial light is a wondrous thing with many advantages there are also some disadvantages. One major disadvantage is that a large portion of our population in the US and other "civilized" countries now suffer from such maladies as SAD.

Instead of looking at the cause to cure the symptoms, we've learned some techniques to mask them so we can continue this unnatural and unhealthy behavior.

- We take drugs to mask the symptoms of a cold or the flu so we can continue working when our body is trying to tell us it needs rest.
- We drink coffee and take other stimulants to jolt the body with artificial, chemically induced energy so we can continue with our hectic schedule. It's no coincidence that Seattle, with its gloomy winters, is the Latte Capital of the World!
- We pop anti-depressants in an effort to block the sadness and low energy that we feel as a result of winter gloom, instead of searching for and using natural means of regaining mental and emotional balance.

The result is that the effects of the cause of SAD (artificial lighting and what it allowed us to do) become compounded as even more technology (drugs such as cold remedies and antidepressants) is piled on the symptoms in a misguided effort to relieve them.

Chapter 3

Your Solar Batteries

Your body needs more than food in order to create energy. It also needs sunlight.

When it doesn't receive sufficient sunlight you experience some - if not all - of the symptoms of SAD. I call this "having low solar batteries".

Your body receives light and utilizes it through two organs:

- **Eyes:** light is received on the retina which is connected directly to the pineal gland
- **Skin:** light is synthesized by the skin and converted into Vitamin D

Your Eyes

The pineal gland is, among other things, the body's light meter. The quantity of light reflected on the retina of the eye signals the pineal to perform certain actions. One of its

most important missions is to control the production of the hormones Melatonin and Serotonin.

Melatonin is the sleep or hibernation hormone. When there's a lack of light the pineal gland orders production of Melatonin so you can sleep. Makes sense, doesn't it? When it's dark the body produces a chemical to aid you in going to sleep. When light is increased, the production of Melatonin is decreased.

One of the effects that Melatonin has on the body is that it lowers body temperature. This is fine if you're sleeping, but if you're awake when your body is producing more Melatonin then it's going to signal you that it wants more calories to burn so it can produce heat and stay warm. Low Melatonin results in cravings for sugar and carbohydrates.

Serotonin is the mood elevator hormone. People who are depressed typically show a low Serotonin level. The pineal gland orders decreased production of Serotonin when there's a lack of light, such as during nighttime or winter.

More light equals more Serotonin (more energy) and less Melatonin (sleep).

Less light equals less Serotonin (less energy) and more Melatonin (more sleep).

Your Skin

Although most people don't think of their skin as an organ, it is. In fact it's the largest organ in the human body. One of its most important functions is to synthesize sunlight and generate Vitamin D.

Recent scientific findings indicate that Vitamin D not only builds strong bones, it's effective in preventing or reducing depression, and especially the depression that's associated with SAD. It also stimulates the immune system to produce Cathelicin, a natural antimicrobial that kills bacteria, virus, and fungi.

Most of us aren't receiving enough sunlight to create sufficient Vitamin D in our bodies. The causes of this are many:

- Smog. The soot particles which make up most of smog reduce the amount of sunlight we receive.
- Working indoors. Even if you have windows near where you work, you're still receiving none of the beneficial rays of the sun that create Vitamin D because they can't penetrate glass.

- Overuse of sunscreen. Even a light sunscreen of SPF 8 reduces the body's ability to produce Vitamin D by 95%.
- Age. As people age the ability of their skin to absorb the beneficial sun's rays decreases.

There are several ways to cope with SAD, some expensive and some relatively inexpensive.

- One of the more expensive methods is to take an extended vacation to a tropical country in the winter. Most of us don't have the financial resources for this method, nor do we have the time.
- A less expensive method is to take antidepressants. While they certainly cost less than a long vacation in Tahiti, they can create side effects which are as bad if not worse than SAD. Besides the fact that they're physically addictive and it's typically very painful to go through the withdrawals to quit them, they have been credited with causing suicidal tendencies. Some antidepressants actually enhance the very problem they were designed to correct. There have been a number of suicides attributed to the chemical imbalances caused by antidepressants.
- Another coping method is to simply hibernate. This is much less expensive than a six month vacation and far less harmful than taking antidepressants. However, it can be rather boring and may lead to even further depression.

Don't fret. There are many methods you can use to overcome SAD that aren't expensive *or* dangerous. Read on...

Chapter 4

Natural Protocols for Overcoming SAD

All of the following protocols have been used by me and are those that I found to be most beneficial in reducing or completely eliminating the symptoms of the Winter Blahs. Keep in mind that every body is different and some of these protocols, methods, and products may work better for you than others.

One important note: to realize optimum benefit from the following protocols, it's best to begin them in October. Your body didn't become light deficient in one day and it won't become light sufficient in one day. It needs time to adjust.

By the time January rolls around you may be so far down you're at eye level with garden slugs. Although October is the best time to begin, the middle of winter still isn't too late for these protocols to have some impact. Some benefit is better than none. And you just never know. You may begin experiencing improvement immediately with some of the protocols.

Just remember next year to start these protocols next October. In fact, now might be a good time to make a note on your calendar!

Light Therapy

The most important protocol is to bring more light into your body. There are several methods of doing this:

- **Full spectrum lighting**

This lighting creates the entire spectrum of light we receive from the sun... at least as much as our current level of science can produce. You'll find incandescent as well as fluorescent lighting in full spectrum. Fluorescent full spectrum can be found in standard 4' long tubes as well as coiled compact fluorescent bulbs. You'll find the full spectrum incandescent to be similar to regular incandescent as far as light quantity, but the fluorescent full spectrum will be much brighter.



Make certain that you're buying full spectrum light bulbs or tubes and not "natural" lighting. If it doesn't actually say "full spectrum" on the packaging, it's probably not. Another clue is that full spectrum is more expensive. Compact fluorescent light bulbs can range in price from \$9 to \$15. It's an investment that's well worth it. They not only last longer, you'll soon feel the effects and will have more energy and be less depressed.

Caution: Do not use them in your bedroom or any other area where you wish to relax. They are *very* energizing.

My personal experience and recommendations: After I installed full spectrum fluorescent tubes in the light fixtures in my office, my Winter Blahs all but disappeared. I recommend them for any work area that isn't outdoors. If you

work in an office building with fluorescent lighting and your company won't pay for full spectrum tubes, buy them yourself. They're that good.

- **Light Box**

These are *not* full spectrum. They are boxes or fixtures with powerfully strong light tubes, usually 10,000 lux or more. The purpose of them is to be a source of bright light for the retina of the eye, which then causes the pineal gland to order more Serotonin and less Melatonin to be produced.



In order for them to be effective you must sit in front of them for up to 30 minutes, with the light box no further than 24" from your eyes.

The boxes may be as large as 12" high by 24" wide, or they may be the newer streamlined models, such as the one pictured.

My personal experience and recommendations: When I initially began my search for anything that would relieve the Winter Blahs this was one of the first things I found. It helped somewhat, but after I began using full spectrum fluorescent lighting I gave my light box away. Please remember this is my personal experience. Others have found them to be of great benefit. My recommendation is this: if you'd like to try one find a company that will give you your money back if it doesn't work for you within 30 days. They're not cheap and good ones can cost in the hundreds of \$\$\$.

- **Dawn Simulator**

This is a device that slowly turns up the light, simulating natural sunrise so your body will awaken naturally. There are basically two kinds of models available. One is a lamp or light fixture with the simulator built into it, while the other is the device only, which you plug your lamp into.

The range in price from \$70 to over \$300. People who use them swear by them. One woman who moved up to Washington state from California told me that if it wasn't for her dawn simulator she'd have to move to someplace with more sunlight.

My personal experience and recommendations: I haven't used one since I don't have to wake up and go to work in the middle of the night (5am, 6am, etc.)

but if I did, this would be one of my first purchases with my first paycheck. Others who use them say that they wake up alert and energetic.

- **Exercise**

Simply going for a walk outside for 30 minutes during mid-day will give you all the light you need. This is the all-around best method for getting the sunlight you need. And it's free! As a bonus, when you exercise the levels of Dopamine and Noradrenalin, which are proven to lessen depression, are increased. Exercise also improves endorphin levels, which provide a general, all-over state of well-being.

Even if it's cloudy or so cold you have to bundle up, you're still getting enough sunlight during a 30 minute walk to produce all the Vitamin D you need. Experts say that 15 minutes of sunlight on the face and hands per day is more than enough for sufficient production of Vitamin D.

My personal experience and recommendations: I know, I know. It's hard to find the time, and it's rainy in the winter, and it's so cold, and on and on. I've probably made more excuses for not getting out and walking than you could ever imagine. But, I do it. And I feel energized when I return from my walk. Absolutely do this! The benefits range much farther than alleviating SAD. If you have trouble getting out every day, at least walk every other day. Make a pact with a friend and do it together. You'll feel so much better in so many ways!

- **No Sunglasses!**

I know they look cool, but they block the needed sunlight from the retina of your eye. Don't wear them unless it's absolutely necessary! If you're driving and the road glare is giving you a headache then by all means put them on. But don't automatically stick them on your face the instant you get in your car. And absolutely don't wear them indoors... unless you're a rock star or a celeb and are facing incredibly strong stage lights and all those annoying flashes from cameras.



Supplements

In addition to giving your body more light, there are nutritional supplements that are beneficial in reducing the effects of SAD.

- **St. John's Wort**

This herb is not an antidepressant as has been touted. The way it works is that it

increases the skin's ability to absorb sunlight, thus producing more Vitamin D which reduces depression. Because of the action it has on skin it's advisable to cease taking it during months with more sunlight (April through September). If you're going on vacation to a sunny area, stop taking it at least a week before you leave and resume the dosage when you return.

- **B complex**

The B family of vitamins are all associated with supporting the nervous system. If you find you're burping them up or they're upsetting your stomach, you might need to take the chelated type, which help your body to assimilate these vitamins.

- **Vitamin C**

Amp up on your intake of Vitamin C during the winter months to support your immune system in fighting off colds and flu. You can take as much as your body will absorb. If you begin to have digestive tract issues, reduce the amount. I take 1gram of Vitamin C every day and even more when I feel a cold coming on.

- **Vitamin D3**

Recently the importance of D3 as an antidepressant has been discovered, so look on your vitamin bottle to make sure you're getting this version of Vitamin D in your supplements. If not, buy it as a separate supplement. Not only did it make a huge difference in my mental state during winter but I've not had a cold since I began taking it every day.

- **Potassium**

Low potassium levels have shown to produce depression. Make sure you're getting enough. Potassium is washed out of the body through sweating and through the urinary system. Even if you don't break a sweat during the day, if you drink lots of water it can cause a potassium deficiency.

- **Calcium and Magnesium**

Together they support the musculature of the body as well as the bones. A lack or low level of either can cause depression.



The most important nutrient of them all is WATER!

Water conducts electricity. When your body is properly hydrated the electrical connections between cells are clearer and more efficient. This causes faster, more clear communication between them, resulting in better health.

Additionally, drinking sufficient water helps your body detoxify. Toxin overload makes you feel sluggish and increases your chances of getting sick.

Healing Modalities

There are several healing modalities that support the immune system and can help reduce the symptoms of SAD – especially the accompanying depression.

- **Get a massage**

One of the most important antidotes to depression is human touch. Studies have shown that babies – both human and animal – that don't receive touch from another experience stunted growth, both physically and mentally. In extreme cases they may even die.

During the winter months it's especially important to receive the healing properties of human touch.

My personal experience and recommendations: Have a massage at least once a month. Once a week is optimum, but if budget and/or time constraints don't allow it, treat yourself to a massage at least once a month. Hot Stone massage is the best in the cold of winter. It warms you to the bone and totally soothes and relaxes. Yum.

- **Acupuncture**

Ok. So it doesn't feel as wonderful as a hot stone massage, but it does work. If you can't deal with the idea of being a human pin cushion, check out acupressure, which is basically the same without the needles. As a bonus, most insurance companies now cover acupuncture sessions.

My personal experience and recommendations: I've had several acupuncture sessions and amazingly it was not painful! In fact I became very relaxed, almost to the point of being in an altered state. Ask for recommendations from friends to find a good acupuncturist. If no one you know has had acupuncture, check the credentials of the acupuncturist you're considering. Mine actually studied acupuncture and herbology in China and gave me some herbs with which to make tea that supported the healing we did during the session.

- **Reiki**

This ancient healing modality was developed in Japan based on teachings in the Christian Bible and the Buddhist sutras. In Japanese Rei means "Spirit or Universe" and ki means "life force". During a Reiki session the practitioner serves

as a pipeline for Life Force energy, bringing it directly into your body. Reiki energy promotes balance within the chakras and the physical body, restoring health and well-being.

During a Reiki session the client remains fully clothed as the practitioner gently lays their hands on them. Most clients experience deep relaxation during the session and afterward enjoy greater energy.

My personal experience and recommendations: Well, I'm a Reiki Master, so of course I heartily recommend having Reiki. As a practitioner, my experience is that typically my clients become so relaxed they go to sleep. Many have experienced immediate results from injuries and illness while others reported healing within a few days. As a Reiki client I can tell you it's a wonderful experience. I use it on myself every day.

- **Meditation**

Years ago meditation was something only the Beatles and the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi did. Thanks to studies done with those who were meditating in the 60s we now have scientific proof of the many healing benefits of meditation, such as lowered blood pressure and stronger immune system.

My personal experience and recommendations: There are all kinds of meditation tapes and CDs now available if you don't already know how to meditate. Because I'm a Type A, repeating a mantra or trying to empty my mind only makes me bored. My solution is the guided meditations, which keep me still and focused. Otherwise I'd be squirming and fidgeting within two minutes.

- **Essential Oils**

The most common use of essential oils is aromatherapy – the inhalation of the aromas of beneficial essential oils. When aromas are inhaled, the molecules of the essence are absorbed by the olfactory system, which encircles the limbic system within the brain. The limbic system is the home of all stored emotions. The quickest and most effective way to access emotional memory so that it can be healed is through smell. To this end, the use of essential oils can be particularly effective. There are several ways they can be used.



Direct application –the oils can be applied directly to the skin on the neck and wrists, such as you would perfume and cologne. This not only allows you to enjoy

Young, based on healing techniques of the Lakota Indians.

My personal experience and recommendations: As a distributor of Young Living Essential Oils, I've used them throughout the years with amazing results. As soon as I feel a cold coming on I'll use oils that are extremely deadly to virus on the spinal area of the bottom of my feet. The next day all symptoms are gone. After Raindrop Therapy I feel as if my spinal column has been cleansed.

It can be difficult to find Raindrop Therapy practitioners if you don't live in a major city, which is why I use the Vitaflex technique. Anyone can easily apply the oils to the bottoms of their own feet, whereas applying them to their own spine is pretty challenging, if not impossible. It's definitely more of a challenge than I want to take on. I heartily recommend both therapies to purge the body of unwanted virus and thus strengthen and support the immune system.

Additional Support for Your Body

In our natural state we actually do hibernate in the winter months. The best support you can give your body is to honor its needs and, as much as you can, follow its natural rhythms.

Use the evening to slow down and prepare for the rest period when you sleep. Meditation, reading, and other quiet activities will make it easier for you to go to sleep and to enjoy deeper, more restful sleep. The evening is not the time to go to the gym to work out.

If you must watch TV in the evening, at least choose a program that's not filled with violence. Even better, use your DVD and watch non-violent movies. This removes the negative influence of all those commercials that are designed to make you crave food filled with carbohydrates, fat, and other harmful ingredients. It also removes the subliminal influence of the drug companies' commercials which are designed to make you sick so you'll buy their drugs.

Do not watch the news. It's nothing but a list of disasters showing violence unparalleled in most action movies and other programs. Additionally, the commercials during the news programs are all about being sick. Just imagine all the messages that are being sent to your subconscious mind as you watch people in these commercials feeling miserable.

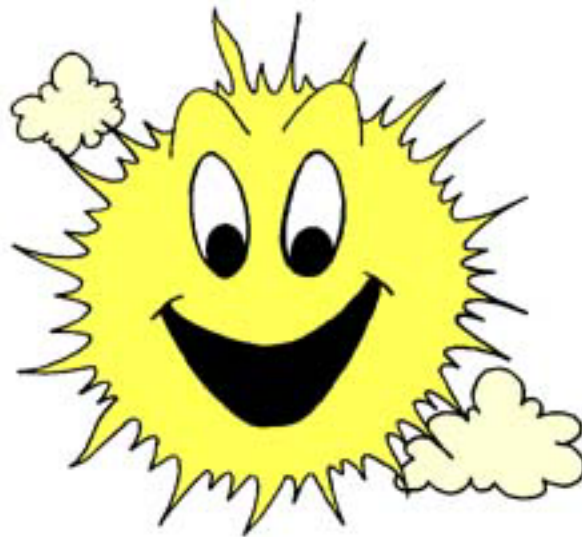
Eat the correct kinds of food – protein, leafy veggies, and lots of water. Hot meals help to keep your body temperature up so you don't use your energy just to heat your body. Spicy foods during winter are beneficial, too.

Less carbohydrates means a more stable blood sugar level, resulting in lower cortisol levels. Cortisol is the hormone that's been associated with aging and death. To help your body stay youthful and full of energy, reduce the amount of carbs you eat. Even if your body is saying "potato chips, bread, mashed potatoes, rice" feed it protein. As your blood sugar levels out the cravings will disappear.

Remember...

It's all about the lack of light. Anything you can do to bring more light into your body and to support it with activities and nutrition that help it in producing more energy will be a plus.

And remember, too, that the sun really is coming back!



I'm baaaaaaaack!!

Resources

Full Spectrum Light Bulbs

<http://www.fullspectrumolutions.com>

<http://www.mercola.com>

<http://www.sunbox.com>

Light Boxes

<http://www.alaskanorthernlights.com>

<http://www.lighttherapyproducts.com>

<http://www.sunbox.com>

Dawn Simulators

<http://www.lighttherapyproducts.com>

<http://www.fullspectrumolutions.com>

<http://www.sunbox.com>

Supplements

Young Living Essential Oils – <http://www.youngliving.us>. Please use my sponsor number 405708

<http://www.webvitamins.com>

Articles

[Full Spectrum Light](#)

[Your Body the Living Battery](#)

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- expanded awareness of potential
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- enjoy life more
- increase their confidence and self esteem
- increase effectiveness and productivity
- open their creativity
- increase their energy and well being
- _____ (fill in the benefit you'd like to enjoy)

I invite you to discover the power of Life Purpose Coaching. Call or email me to schedule your private introductory session.

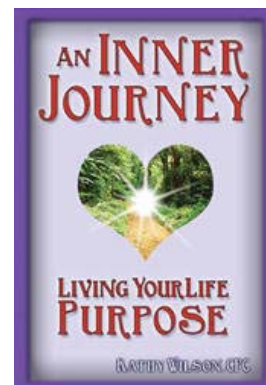
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