**SAD and Winter Blues – An Explanation**

Every winter thousands of people feel less joyful than they normally do. The degree to which they feel down varies widely.

Some experience full-blown depression while others simply seem to have the blues. Most people assume they have SAD. This may not be true, however. The treatment for SAD and the winter blues is quite different.

If you struggle with depression during the winter months, it can be tough. Finding the right treatment and diagnosis is key.

**SAD Defined**

SAD stands for Seasonal Affective Disorder. It is not the winter blues. It affects people on a regular basis. Each fall and winter, as the sky grows colder and darker, people begin to experience this depression.

**Symptoms of SAD include but are not limited to:**

* Depression
* Feelings of hopelessness
* Anxiety
* Social withdrawal
* Loss of interest in pleasurable activities
* Appetite changes and weight gain
* Difficulty concentrating and focusing
* Lack of energy and difficulty sleeping

If these symptoms persist for more than a few days and consistently return season after season, you probably have SAD. It’s important to see your doctor and get properly diagnosed.

Because SAD is often caused by lower levels of melatonin and serotonin, treatment for SAD often includes:

* Light therapy
* Medications
* Home therapy

There are also some home and alternative therapies like dietary changes, yoga, meditation and supplementation that have been shown to improve SAD.

**Winter Blues**

The winter blues is just as common as SAD; however, the symptoms don’t persist. They don’t last as long and they don’t necessarily show up like clockwork when the seasons change.

The winter blues happen when a person is feeling down for a couple of days. Getting out and socializing, exercising and making a few dietary changes can alleviate the problem.

Many people experience an occasional bout of the blues. And the winter is a common time for it to creep up. The sky is dark. The air is cold. People don’t get as much fresh air and sunshine as they need.

**How Do You Know If It’s the Blues or SAD?**

Take a look at your symptoms. If they occur regularly, year after year, then it’s probably SAD. If your symptoms don’t go away after a few days and they persist or worsen, then it’s probably SAD. If you’re in doubt about what’s going on, always see your doctor. When it comes to your mental health it’s good to be cautious.

If you’re diagnosed with SAD, there are ways to manage the condition. If it’s the winter blues, then create a plan to stay positive. Diet and exercise improve both SAD and the winter blues, so take good care of yourself. This winter, find joy and happiness and leave depression and sadness behind!