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Transcript Learn English Article 116

3 Facts About Being SAD in the UK

Summary

This is the transcript article for podcast 116 of the Adept English Monday English language listening lessons.

Now, this week's subject. Have you ever heard of SAD or Seasonal Affective Disorder? Well, I work with mental health – and mental health is concerned with feeling well in your mind, in your head. Put simply, it's about whether you feel happy or unhappy.



Welcome

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People feel more or less SAD at different times of the year

Now, this week's subject. Have you ever heard of SAD or Seasonal Affective Disorder? Well, I work with mental health – and mental health is concerned with feeling well in your mind, in your head. Put simply, it's about whether you feel happy or unhappy. And in mental health, you hear all kinds of names and labels for how people feel. And SAD or Seasonal Affective Disorder is just one of these. What do the words mean? Well, 'Seasonal' is an adjective and it comes from the word 'season' which is a noun. And the four seasons are winter, spring, summer and autumn. So if something is 'seasonal', it means it changes with the seasons – it's different, depending upon the time of year. The word 'Affective' is an adjective and it comes from the noun 'affect', which is another word for 'feeling'. And the kind of feeling that we're talking about here is emotions, emotional feeling. Put simply, it means whether you're happy or sad. And the last word 'Seasonal Affective Disorder' - 'Disorder' is just an official, medical word for an illness. If something is a disorder, it's a known set of symptoms, a list of things that are wrong, grouped together they make a 'disorder'. I suppose it's the opposite of 'order'. If 'everything is in order', it means everything is OK. So then 'Seasonal Affective Disorder' or SAD is where peoples' level of happiness is affected by the different seasons.

I know I feel better with some sunshine on my face

And it's thought that this is because of different levels of light. So the difficult season isn't the summer of course, it's the winter. And that the light levels are lower. And the further north you are, the worse this is. And SAD, which spells



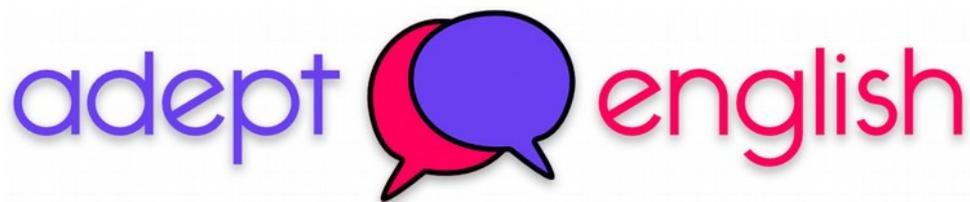
sad is an apt name, a suitable name, because with SAD, you do feel sad. Because we're quite far north in the UK, our winters are quite dark. In the middle of winter, it's dark by 4 o'clock in the afternoon – that's 16:00 hours. And depending upon where you live, it may not really get light until 8.30 in the morning. And although in the winter, we do have nice sunny, cold days with blue skies – we also have a lot of days, where the clouds are probably several miles thick and it doesn't really get light. Most people who have grown up in the UK are fine with this, they're used to it. But some people have a really difficult time in the winter, when there isn't much daylight. And we might say that they suffered from SAD or Seasonal Affective Disorder.

My experience shows me that where you grew up seems to affect this. If you grew up in the north of Scotland or Scandinavia, then you're possibly used to the dark weather in winter and maybe you aren't affected very much by it. But if you grew up in southern Europe or Africa, sunnier parts of America or South America, the Far East or even Australia or New Zealand, then if you spend your winter time further north, it may be quite a shock. For some people the lack of daylight is difficult and they feel unhappy.

The weather and the amount of sun light you get plays an important part

One reason could be this. When you sit in the sun, your skin absorbs the light and processes happen in your body which make Vitamin D. Vitamin D is essential for all kinds of things. And what scientists are discovering now, is that Vitamin D is really important to balance the chemicals in your brain.

Apparently in the winter time in the UK, the lack of light means that we're all a bit low on Vitamin D, though our levels come back up quickly again, if we sit in the sun. Another factor is how dark or how light is your skin? If you come from the north of Scotland, you might have very white skin. And the whiter your skin, the more quickly your body makes Vitamin D. Whereas if you have darker skin, your body doesn't make Vitamin D quite as quickly. And this sort of makes sense. If you're very pale skinned and you come from a place where there isn't much sun, your body has to hurry up and make Vitamin D really quickly. But if you have dark skin but you live in a place with not much light, you may have to take Vitamin D tablets or use a light lamp to feel OK in the winter.



People who come to the UK from hot, sunny countries often feel SAD the most

I think part of it is also about your 'mindset'. Your 'mindset' is 'how you see things, what expectations you have in your mind, which colour how you experience things'. So if you come from a country like South Africa, New Zealand or Australia, where the weather is warm and sunny much of the time, perhaps you associate pleasure and happy things with going on the beach, swimming, eating and drinking outside, BBQs on Christmas Day, watching the sunset. And then, if you're living in Britain in the winter, you're unlikely to be doing any of the things, which normally you associate with being happy – you would freeze if you tried to! So if you can't do the activities that make you feel happy normally, maybe you feel unhappy instead. However, there are pleasures associated with living in a wintry climate. There's something really nice about a winter day being in your house, where the weather outside is awful, but you're nice and warm, you've got your furry socks on and a nice fire going, you're enjoying a hot drink or even a hot alcoholic drink or maybe some hot soup. If you go on holiday in the winter in the UK, you might rent a cottage, and you just assume the weather is going to be bad. But you'll have a nice log fire and a local pub, which means that when you're cold and wet, having gone for a walk, you've got somewhere nice to go to afterwards. If you live even further north, then maybe in the winter you look forward to skiing, snowboarding and sledging and all those other winter sports. You just have to take your pleasures a different way!

So I hope also that this information is useful to you, especially if you find the northern winter has a negative effect. There are things you can do about it! Sit in the sun at every opportunity, take Vitamin D tablets and perhaps try a light lamp. And learn to enjoy the pleasures of bad weather! And if you are feeling a bit SAD, Seasonal Affective Disorder or just plain sad, then April is here and the light levels are rising, so things should get better from now on.

Goodbye

Enough for now. Have a lovely day. Speak to you again soon. Goodbye.



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