



Two thirds of SAD sufferers are women whose symptoms usually begin in their twenties. Some studies show that men may have more severe symptoms. It is uncommon in children and teenagers. For adults the risk of SAD decreases with age.

For many people with SAD there can be a family history of mental health problems, most frequently a severe depressive disorder (55%) or with alcohol abuse (34%).

The World Health Organization does not yet recognise SAD as a distinct mental disorder, classifying it as a subtype of depression or bipolar disorder.

What are the symptoms of SAD?

Symptoms of SAD are recurrent, they keep coming back year after year and cyclic, they tend to come and go at about the same time every year and they can vary from person to person.

Common symptoms of winter-onset SAD include:

- Change in appetite, especially craving foods high in carbohydrates, weight gain.
- Loss of energy, feelings of extreme fatigue, inability to maintain a regular lifestyle schedule, tendency to oversleep.
- Difficulty concentrating, irritability and anxiety, hopelessness.
- Avoidance of social situations and a loss of interest in activities that used to be enjoyed.

How common is SAD?

Seasonal affective disorder is very rare in the tropics, but is measurably present at latitudes of 30°N (or South) and higher. The further someone lives from the equator, the more likely they are to develop SAD.

The Mental Health Foundation (UK) estimates that 1 in 8 people in the UK have a mild low mood during winter, but not full depression, whilst 1 in 100 becomes depressed and suffers from SAD.

In the U.S, 4 to 5% of the population suffers from

SAD and another 10 to 20% experience a milder form of winter blues. Sweden (with an estimated 20% incidence), Canada, and Netherlands are among the countries with a higher number of cases.

What causes SAD?

As with many mental health conditions, it is likely that genetics, age and your own body's natural chemical makeup have a role in the development of SAD. Suggested causes include:

- **Circadian rhythm**
The circadian rhythm is a physiological process that helps regulate the body's internal clock, letting us know when to sleep or wake. Some researchers suspect that a reduced level of sunlight disrupts the circadian rhythm in certain people, which may result in depression.
- **Melatonin**
The body's production of melatonin usually increases during the long nights of winter. Melatonin is a sleep related hormone that has been linked to depression by some researchers.
- **Serotonin**
Reduced sunlight can reduce the levels of serotonin (a brain neurotransmitter that affects mood), which may lead to depression.

When to seek medical advice?

When you can't seem to get motivated to do activities you normally enjoy, if you notice that your sleep patterns and appetite have changed and certainly if you feel hopeless or find yourself turning to alcohol for comfort or relaxation, you should see your doctor immediately.

How is SAD treated?

Although definitive evidence from clinical trials is lacking, light therapy is considered the first-line treatment; if properly dosed can produce relief within days. Antidepressants and psychotherapy may also help in some cases.

Light therapy is taken by sitting in front of special light boxes (white fluorescent light), with the light delivered at eye level. It takes about 30 minutes each day throughout autumn and winter and if it helps it should continue until enough sunlight is available, usually springtime. Tanning beds (high in ultra-violet rays) are not recommended.

Some basic measures like getting outside often during winter (especially on bright days), sitting close to bright windows at home or in the office, exercising regularly and having a diet rich in fruit and vegetables may help with milder symptoms.

The message is just like for many other health conditions: **ENJOY THE OUTDOORS, KEEP ACTIVE, MAINTAIN A GOOD DIET AND SEEK HELP IN TIME!**



Dr Zelia Araujo-Muggli graduated from medical school in her native Portugal. She is a member of the UK Royal College of Paediatrics and Child

Health, and has worked as a paediatrician in Portugal, the UK and Oman. She is a Shell spouse and mother of two children and currently lives in Dubai.



ANDREW RUDGE

“FOR THE GUIDANCE OF WISE MEN AND THE OBEDIENCE OF FOOLS” - Sir D R S Bader

Tempers are frayed. The air is positively thrumming with tension. The little puffs of steam show pressure has hit the ‘critical’ level. And there’s still a week to go. Beam me up Scotty, the dilithium crystals have fractured, the screamometre is about to blow and life will never be the same again!

You hardened expats out there; the heroes of the days when you packed your world onto a couple of mules for a month-long trek through the jungle, or harnessed the dogs for a frost-bitten run under the Northern Lights, your wife and kids smeared with walrus blubber and wrapped in polar bear fur to beat the cold...you can scoff and sneer. No, I’m sure it’s not like it was in your day and yes, we are all going soft; but every era brings its challenges and here in the first decade of the 21st

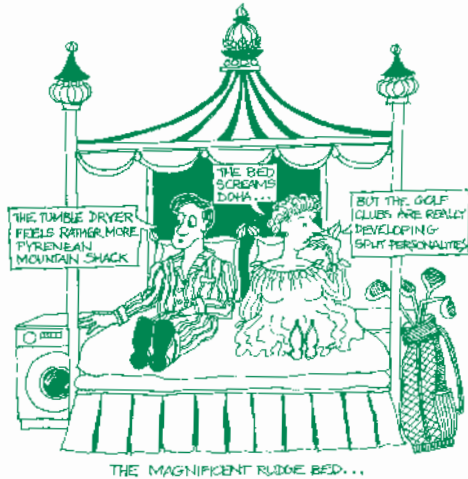
century the Rudge household is going through the Maelstrom of a move.

It really shouldn’t be a big deal. It’s just the two of us; and Loekie, our Dutch cat, who came to us courtesy of the Dierenzorg (animal rescue centre) outside Wassenaar. No kids to vaccinate or prise away from schoolmates, soul mates, or teammates. No training in survival techniques or unarmed spider wrestling. No sense of impending privation, just a couple of jabs, bravely borne; a passport for the cat and a few cardboard boxes to fill. But it is a big deal. It’s amazing how much stuff you collect in almost four years... not counting the cat. We’ve more furniture than when we arrived here; more clothes to sort and sift. Pots and pans, like boots and shoes left in dark cupboards, have multiplied. Then there

“Your wife and kids smeared with walrus blubber and wrapped in polar bear fur”

are our Dutch bikes, beautiful examples of the cycle-makers’ art, perfectly suited to the cycle-friendly Netherlands, but likely to be as useful as snowshoes in Doha or as ride-able as wild boar in the French Pyrenees. And that’s how most of the problems arise.

For we later-life, city-softened, latter-day travellers are moving in two directions at once. On the job front we’re heading for a sand, sunscreen and air-con life in Qatar. On the personal front we’re gearing-up for eventual retirement to our ‘newly-built-but-not-yet-finished’ wooden shack halfway up a mountain in the French Pyrenees. And as we no longer have a home in the UK that means some of our stuff has to go one way and some of it has to go the other. Sorting clothes is comparatively easy, but it does get chilly in Doha in winter and who’s to say we won’t feel the need for a bit of ‘coats on air-con to ten degrees’ decadence at the height of the summer? Should our golf clubs go to Doha along with our magnificent bed, or to France with the tumble dryer and fishing rods? We’ve already moved our garden furniture, indoor plants and assorted outdoor statuary to a friend’s place in Cognac, along with our cars. And we’re hoping the builders will take pity on us, finish the house and let us move our ‘that’s the France pile’ stuff down there before winter sets in again. But will they keep their minds on the job without me there to ‘supervise’, to provide entertainment by swinging from the scaffolding while I paint the ceilings eight metres from the floor, or to make those vital decisions about the location of switches and hanging of doors? Loekie has had his jabs, also bravely borne, and his travel palace, too grand to be called a kennel stands waiting in the hallway. He’s bewildered by the whole thing,



but is distinctly less stressed than we. “Oh goody, the man who feeds me has built me a cardboard box world to play in!” “Is this box of cashmere sweaters my new bed?” “Do they have prawns in Doha?” And there’s still a week to go.

A couple of pack mules and a passport, a dog sled and a compass, a dugout canoe and an uncertain welcome; things were tougher in those days. But I envy those pioneer expats who hacked the Shell empire from lands that had no names; on continents that few knew existed. They had it easy. No ‘advisors’ in different time zones to do battle with. No contradictory regulations to balance and juggle. No heights of incredulity to scale when advised that the company prefers to spend twice as much to send your stuff half way around the world and back rather than send it where you want it to go and no grey-suited, rule-bound, pettifogging, bureaucratic morons to dream of strangling with their own red tape!

SUCCESSFULLY SHIVERING IN THE DUNES

After 15 years as a water-resources engineer, Erik Hagen made the tough decision to quit his rewarding career and follow his wife to the Netherlands. The opportunity to dust off his university training in studio art, rekindle his passion for making art, and reinventing himself as a full-time painter proved irresistible.



ERIK HAGEN

On one strikingly cold March morning in 2008, I made a sketch of the tram turn-around at Scheveningen. I was alone; I missed the camaraderie of my professional colleagues, the predictability of office life, and the sense of purpose from my engineering work. I did not know a soul here and I had half-frozen fingers.

Fast-forward a year, and by some measures I am a successful artist. (It is important for an artist to carefully define success, thus ensuring goals are achievable. Tying ones own shoe does not count as a good artistic goal, although it has the advantage of being achievable.) I feel successful in that I am happy with the process of making art and the life we have created here. It is invigorating (some, including my wife might say 'crazy') to go out to the beach and paint in 60 kilometre per hour winds with five-degree temperatures, getting sand in my eyes and on my paintings. But I love it. It helps that I have better equipment now than I did on that cold day in 2008. I love loading all my gear up onto my tank-like bike and heading out to the dunes. I love the smell of oil paint and the fresh sea air. I love the challenge of capturing the atmosphere and light of the oh-so-quickly changing, now-you-see-it-now-you-don't Dutch winter landscape. Being outdoors

allows me to make fascinating new discoveries; like learning that oil paint sticks to canvas even in the rain, and even if the rain is frozen.

By another yardstick, I am successful in that I have posted a new 'Work of the Week' to my website every week for nearly a year. Admittedly, they are not of uniform quality but I have posted something each week and I've started selling more work. I receive anonymous comments on the site and people also vote for their favourites. I have received some hilarious comments, and constructive ones too.

The process of building my new life in The Hague was greatly facilitated by the nice folks at Outpost. It was valuable to have a meeting with them to talk about my career and development. Becoming an artist via engineering is an unusual

career path to say the least, but they went out of their way to help me connect to the art world here. Funnily enough they put me in touch with the director of the Women's Business Initiative International who helped me to figure out how to set up as an official Dutch business. She was kind enough to help me even though I didn't fit into the standard client profile of her company. The biggest support came from my spouse, Tamara Nameroff. She put up with a grumpy, shivering and lonely expat during the first months of our move here; and supported my decision to pursue my life-long dream of being a full-time artist.



Currently, I am painting outside in the fresh air, making small outdoor oil paintings of Scheveningen Beach and The Hague. If you see me out painting in the dunes or elsewhere, please say hello. I'm the guy shivering in the yellow, oil-paint-stained raincoat.

I wouldn't be a success without the support of my wife, Outpost and my wise friend Clair Garman, who helped convince me to give up engineering and become an artist. When he came to visit me not long after we arrived, I was sketching him whilst sitting in a café in Amsterdam, and my decision to pursue art full-time was cemented when he said to me, "Ain't nothin' worse than getting to the end of your life, looking back and saying, 'I wish I had done that'".



To see Erik's work please visit his website
www.potamoi.com