# Shining a light on SAD

For those of you who do not know what [SAD](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/seasonal-affective-disorder-sad/) is, count your blessings. It is a form of depression that makes its presence felt (usually) in winter and in varying degrees of severity.

There is no cure as such but there are coping strategies, habits to acquire that help and in more severe cases, antidepressant medication. It is the habits and coping strategies I should like to share with you.

Describing SAD, or depression, to people who don’t suffer is difficult. “A child doesn’t understand a hammer until he’s mashed his finger at a nail”. A friend described it as losing the concept of happiness. They knew they had been happy in the past but no longer had any idea what that felt like. Would there ever be light to the endless grey of emotional numbness. I would describe it as a sort of psychic hypothermia. It sneaks up on you and by the time you recognise it you are struggling.

On a more positive note another friend described the realisation that she had come out the other side by saying “I suddenly realised I felt like me again”!

## Why write about SAD now?

Obviously, November through to February is the season where it is most common.

A lot of work has taken over the last few years to destigmatise depression and mental health issues. With this new openness has come the realisation as to just how many friends and colleagues have suffered or are suffering. Depression does not have to be caused by external factors but the external stresses forced on us by COVID certainly present additional straws for the donkey’s back.

* Loss of or separation from loved ones
* Fears about job security and all that entails
* Stress over the business decisions that would usually be rare occurrences (furloughs, redundancies and business survival)
* Extraverts forced to live an introverted way of life

## What have I found to be helpful in dealing with SAD?

### Lighting

Under normal circumstances my exposure to daylight is constrained by my commute and working hours. Under COVID I have more control over my time. This gives me the freedom to adjust my schedule to take advantage of what daylight is available. Even if this means working at opposite ends of the day to gain daylight in the middle.

I have found that a lightbox does help. It took about a week to start to notice a difference.

### Alcohol and Caffeine

Alcohol is a depressant and metabolic poison. The temptation is to drink more when it is better to cut back as much as possible.

As anxiety is a factor for me I also cut back on coffee. IT thrives on Coffee so this was quite a difficult adjustment.

### Milestones to half-milestones

### Exercise