

## Ask Your Therapist

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### Seasonal Affective Disorder

It may seem odd to you to see a column on Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) in the middle of the summer, but there are 2 good reasons for this. The first is that there is a kind of SAD that appears in the summer (as opposed to the kind of Seasonal Affective Disorder that people associate with the autumn and winter and the decrease in sunlight). Summer SAD is characterized by a marked decrease of energy, a desire to sleep more than usual, overeating and weight gain, and a craving for carbohydrates.

I have also seen a kind of pseudo-Summer SAD which happens to individuals with histories of childhood trauma where the trauma occurred mainly in the summer and their symptoms are a kind of anniversary response to that trauma. Such trauma might have occurred while away on vacation, at camp, in the presence of someone they only see in the summer, or due to summer being a time when people wear fewer clothes and access to them/their bodies is easier.

If you suffer from either kind of SAD, please let your doctor know. Winter SAD can be treated with Light Box Therapy, counseling, exercise, and sometimes antidepressants are used if the Light Box Therapy isn't enough to turn things around. Summer SAD and pseudo-SAD can be treated with therapy, exercise and medication. Light Box Therapy isn't usually used in the summer because we already have enough sunlight.

If you tend to get uncontrollably energetic with the return of the sunlight in late Spring, you may want to ask your doctor to see if you have manic episodes that are part of Bipolar Disorder. Counseling will help with all these conditions.

Finally, if you have experienced a significant loss in the last year, you may not feel as chipper as you usually feel in the summer. You may feel different or separate from your friends and family who may not feel as you do. This can make you feel alienated from your support system. It's a normal part of grieving to go through this. Letting understanding people in your life know how you are feeling may help diminish those feelings of separation and loneliness. If it goes on for an extended amount of time or gets deeper and darker, you may want to have a few sessions with your doctor or a therapist to help you turn that around.

To read all the prior Ask Your Therapist columns go to [www.krishnabai.com](http://www.krishnabai.com) where you can also send Krishnabai a general question for her column.

Krishnabai, MSW is a therapist in Ashby and Wellesley Hills where she sees adults, older teens and couples. The core of her work is the discovery and

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