

SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER

By: Susan Presler
Bereaved Mother
Oak Park, IL

Dear Fellow Travelers,

There is an illness called Seasonal Affective Disorder. It's most prominent in the winter, due to the fact that people are inside most of the day, and are not getting certain vitamins our bodies' need, which sunlight provides.

Those who suffer from SAD experience depression and a lackadaisical attitude. They seem to be "down" not knowing why. Bereaved parents know why we are down, but SAD can worsen the symptoms of our despondency. When spring arrives, SAD seems to disappear for most people - - they are outdoors more often. (This is all a layman's understanding of this disorder.)

We read many articles that talk about bereaved parents and the "seasons" of grief - - "we are in the winter of our grief." (Supposedly the worst part), with the promise that spring will be a "rebirth." That "nature and creatures abound with the glories of the season, coming alive again."

I believe this outlook is misleading and can put an additional burden on the bereaved. "Why am I not feeling better? I am supposed to be emerging from my grief, just like the nature emerges from its winter." "Spring is THE time to get better."

While it is great to believe that some day we will be able to carry our burden of anguish more easily, there is NO timetable. You know where you are in your grief process, and it's okay to be just where you are - don't listen to those "chirping birds" who say it's time to be better.