HOW TO SURVIVE IN KAAMOS
What is kaamos and winter-SAD or subsyndromal winter-SAD
THINKING OF KAAMOS MAKES ME FEEL...
KAAMOS = POLAR NIGHT

- Sun does not rise above the horizon.
- Polar night is seen north of the Arctic Circle and south of the Antarctic Circle.
- In the most northern parts of Finland, the polar night lasts for 51 days.
- South of Sodankylä, kaamos refers to a period of darkness from October to the beginning of March, when the sun only rises above the horizon for a short period of time every day. Most significant mental effects are observed from November to January.
EFFECTS OF KAAMOS ON FINNISH PEOPLE

• People find it difficult to adjust to the dramatic seasonal changes.
  – 10 % have no symptoms
  – 60 % experience some fatigue
  – 26-29 % experience subsyndromal winter-SAD
  – 1-4 % suffer from winter-SAD requiring treatment

• Winter-SAD is much more common in women than in men, and symptoms become more difficult with age.

• The longer your distance from the equator, the more winter-SAD symptoms you will have!
WINTER-SAD AND SUBSYNDROMAL WINTER-SAD HAVE THEIR ORIGINS IN BIOLOGY.

1. In the cerebrum, a few centimetres away from the eyes, lays a bunch of neurons that conveys information of the time of day. It keeps time using external cues such as alternations of light and darkness. Certain gene abnormalities may interfere with this function.

2. During the night, the pineal gland secretes melatonin into the blood stream. In some people, the melatonin leaves the body at a slower rate than in others. As a result, they may find mornings extremely difficult to cope with.

During kaamos, our brain gets confused as dark mornings do not lower the sleep hormone levels in our body.
SYMPTOMS OF WINTER-SAD AND THE MILDERSUBSYNDROMAL WINTER-SAD

• Increase in need for sleep 76 %
• Increase in appetite, especially carbohydrates 70 %
• Feeling sad for no reason 96 %
• Lack of initiative and energy, fatigue 96 %
• Anxiety 86 %
• Weight gain due to a sweet tooth 74 %
• Low sex drive 69 %
• Irritability 86 %
• Need for solitude, lack of interest 92 %

The percentages illustrate the number of people suffering from each symptom.
HOW TO TREAT WINTER-SAD?

Bright light therapy affects the central nervous system

• Decreases the production of melatonin and increases the production of serotonin. 2,500 lux minimum (regular room lighting 500-1,000 lux) for 30-60 minutes every morning for at least two weeks. Keep your eyes open!

• Staying outdoors during light hours and turning on all the lights indoors in the morning are also ways to enjoy ”light therapy”.

• Exercise, especially walking and other enjoyable methods of exercise have a positive effect on mood and general condition. Walk on ice, in a snowy forest or together with friends.
OTHER WAYS TO FEEL BETTER...

• If very harmful symptoms ask our doctors about the possibility to have an antidepressant for winter months.
• Tell your friends about your symptoms, don’t keep your worries to yourself.
• Spend time outdoors during light hours whenever possible.
• Keep your apartment well lit.
• Get sufficient amount of vitamin D from tablets or food.
• Visualise yourself in warm and sunny places.
• Keep in touch with people close to you despite the fatigue.
• Eat well (fruits, vegetables, fish, bread).
• Candles and good music, books or films.
• Take time to yourself away from your obligations.
AND FIRST OF ALL:
Have fun with Your Friends!