

# Shrink Rap: Remodeling Affective Disorder

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You've probably heard of SAD, or Seasonal Affective Disorder. It's the "winter blues," caused by a lack of sunlight and the body's inability to produce melatonin. It's believed to be a disturbance of the circadian rhythm and is treated by heavy daily doses of artificial light.

But now comes an equally debilitating disorder known as RAD, or Remodeling Affective Disorder. Chances are, you've never heard of it — even if you've suffered through it.

RAD affects an astonishing one-half of all adults in this country who begin major remodeling or landscaping projects during the winter, when there is less daylight time to do the work. This is when workers would rather be out celebrating the holidays than working on your house or back yard. It's an affliction that leaves many sufferers wanting to climb into bed, duck under the covers, and not show their face again until late spring, when the project is finished. Because of this, some experts refer to RAD as a form of hibernation.

Onset is precipitated by contractors or their subs not showing up to do their work. They promise they'll be there bright and early but hours pass and nobody arrives or calls. No sub-contractor, no workers, no jack-hammers—nothing. Homeowners are forced to face the cruel reality that their sub-contractor is choosing to work on someone else's project.

Symptoms of RAD typically include feelings of anxiety, abandonment, anger, and resentment. Individuals may be seen mumbling to themselves. Bouts of helplessness may alternate with rage and fantasies of revenge. Symptoms may be exacerbated by project inspection failures, unexpected plan execution problems, uncooperative neighbors, and bad weather delays. Other life activities seem to lose their attraction. Attention becomes focused on frequent weather reports and completing the next phase of the project.

For the estimated three million severely affected adults, RAD can send them into a downward spiral that makes it difficult if not impossible to fulfill their daily responsibilities. The symptoms of RAD may mimic those of depression. Patients report having to drag themselves out of bed in the morning and force themselves to perform necessary chores. They would just as soon not see anybody or do anything. They find it difficult to concentrate or think clearly.

Sufferers find themselves cursing the day they signed their remodeling or landscaping contract. They imagine all the other ways they could have spent the money that is now committed to a project moving as slow as molasses and where change orders create additional costs, sending an already bloated project skyrocketing into the stratosphere.

Sex drive often dwindles markedly but is typically replaced by an insatiable appetite for carbohydrates and sweets that results in weight gain. Self-medicating with chocolate is frequently reported. Many people with RAD have two wardrobes—the one for living through remodeling projects being at least two sizes larger.

An additional four million people are less severely affected while living through smaller projects. But they may be subject to declines in energy, cheerfulness, creativity or productivity in the dark days of winter when they have contracted for minor remodeling or landscaping.

The most common treatment for RAD is exposure of up to eight hours per day of high-intensity work by the contractor or sub-contractor's crew. Workers show up on time, work hard, eat lunch like real men, consume mass quantities of caffeine, and things get done. This does wonders for the RAD sufferer's mental stability and promotes well-being and optimism that the project will actually be completed before summer.

RAD sufferers have gone so far as to form their own online support groups. RAD-Anon members talk each other through symptoms and the various phases of their respective projects. One such group is [www.radmakesmenutz.com](http://www.radmakesmenutz.com). When support groups are insufficient to lessen symptoms, referral to a psychologist trained in dealing with RAD is clearly indicated.