

Light Relieves Seasonal Blues

A new study backs up previous findings that light therapy is as effective as antidepressants for seasonal affective disorder (SAD).

SAD occurs during the fall or winter months with the reduction of sunlight, and manifests as mild depression with low mood, low energy, oversleeping, overeating (especially sweets), and weight gain. It is most prevalent in northern climes; an estimated 2.7 percent of Canadians and Americans suffer from SAD.

In the study, which was published in a recent issue of the *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 99 people with SAD were randomly placed into two groups for eight weeks during the winter. One group used a light box delivering 10,000 lux of light for 30 minutes every morning and took a placebo pill; the other group took a pre-

scribed antidepressant and sat before a neutral light box. (An object placed one foot from a candle receives about 10 lux.)

After eight weeks there was 50 percent or greater reduction in SAD symptoms in 67 percent of the study participants. Depression was resolved in 50 to 54 percent of participants. There was no significant difference between the two groups.

"The choice of treatment always depends on individual assessment of risk and benefits," wrote the study authors, "but in the absence of clear superiority for either treatment, patient preference should be a major factor in treatment selection."

— Source: *Healthnotes Newswire*

Solve Problems by Forgetting About Them

Have you ever wondered why you get some of your best ideas in the shower, or why you become more and more insightful as each day of your vacation passes by?

There are two basic modes of operation for the human brain. There is the analytical, thinking mode—the mode we use when we want to memorize something, review financial reports or learn a new skill. And there is the relaxed, insightful mode—the one that allows us to rest our thoughts, be present in the moment and access wisdom. This is the mode we shift to when taking a shower or while relaxing on vacation. Both modes are important, and each can be more useful when used in the right way.

Because our culture is so focused on information, most of us live from the neck up. Our brains stay stuck in the analytical mode of thinking, and this makes it difficult to relax and enjoy the richness that life has to offer. When we rely on the analytical, computing mode to handle situations of a less definitive nature (like writing or relating to others), we end up struggling to



"figure things out" rather than allowing the answer to surface effortlessly.

If you want to enjoy life more fully, the trick is to teach yourself to live in the more insightful mode more often.

Take-Action Challenge

Pick a problem or challenge, and instead of ruminating over and over in your mind about what should be done, ask your relaxed brain to solve the problem while you do something else. Set a specific time for the answer to surface, and let it go. Create a mantra to use when your analytical brain tries to take over, and when ready, arrive at the intended result time and see what shows up.

Practicing this simple exercise on a regular basis will not only teach you to access your inner wisdom, but it will train your brain to use this mode more often.

— from Cheryl Richardson's *Life Makeover for the Year 2006*, www.cherylrichardson.com/newsletter.

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