



Staying Up in an Upside-Down World Newsletter

“Beating the Winter Blues”

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Notice: you are receiving the “De-stress” newsletter after signing up at one of Darren’s workshops or on-line.

As the thermometer drops outside many of us feel like our moods drop along with it. Often we start feeling blah or lack energy, is it just in our heads or is there something real going on here. Well it turns out, absolutely, there is something real going on here and I found this out quite by accident.

Back in January, 2003, my family and I were in Vancouver for a week and arrived at the airport for our flight home. It had been a long winter for me. To put it bluntly, I felt lousy. My energy was low and I had no motivation. On top of that, our little ones, who were three and five at the time, had colds, were tired and everyone was all around cranky.

After navigating our way through the maze that is the Vancouver airport for what felt like hours, we finally found our gate. I dropped all the luggage, set the DVD player up for the kids and shuffled off to take a much needed bathroom break. As I rounded the corner to enter the bathroom, which was currently being renovated, I was struck by a huge blast of light, almost like when you pass someone at night on the highway and they leave their “brights” on.

The bathroom had several huge temporary industrial size floodlights hanging overhead. Tired and red-eyed as I was, I remembered thinking...”ummmmmmm, that feels kinda good.”

I shuffled over so I was directly under one of these mammoth construction lights. I looked straight up into its piercing brightness. “Ahhhhhhhh, this actually feels really good.” It felt like it was feeding my body something I severally needed.

Because this was the best I had felt in quite sometime, I just stood their gawking straight up at this light. In my peripheral vision, I could see a businessman walking into the bathroom while talking on his cell phone. His hurried pace slowed as he walked by me. I sensed his puzzled face looking at me...then up

at the light...then back down at me, as if to say “are you ok buddy?”

I didn't know why I was drawn to the light or how it worked, I just knew it felt good.

I looked into this further when I got home and found out a few interesting tidbits. I discovered that when our eyes are stimulated by bright light, like sunshine, it sends a message to a little gland in the middle of our brain telling it to make serotonin, our bodies' natural good-mood fluid. As the intensity of the sun fades, in fall and winter, this gland receives less stimulation and thus produces less serotonin and our mood naturally drops.

So, when you live in a country where winter comes like clockwork every year, what can you do?

Tips to Beat the Winter Blues...

One of the best solutions I have found are light boxes. A light box is about the size of a small flat panel computer monitor and produces an intense light (far brighter than any household light). The idea is you sit in this light while you are working at a computer, reading or even watching TV. It stimulates the little gland in your brain and boosts your mood throughout the winter months.

Over the years, I have owned a couple different light boxes and have found they can really help boost your mood and energy levels.

Tips on Light boxes:

- 1. Where to buy** – Specialty lighting stores usually carry a few different options. I have also seen them at stores like London Drugs and even Costco.
- 2. Florescent light or LED** – I have owned each kind and found they both worked well. The florescent light boxes tend to be bigger so you don't have to sit as close to them and it makes it a bit easier to get your light.
- 3. Brightness-** the intensity of these lights is measured in lux. On a sunny summer day the brightness of the sun can range between 50,000 and 100,000 lux. Light boxes usually range between about 5,000 and 12,000 lux. I would recommend something in the area of 10,000 lux.
- 4. How to use-** You treat these lights much like the sun. The idea is that you don't want to look directly into the light. You want the light box to shine into your eyes at about a 45 degree angle.
- 5. Timing** - I feel the best time to use this light is in the morning to help boost your mood throughout the day.
- 6. Duration** – most of the information I have read recommends sitting in front of your light box between 20 and 60 minutes a day. Everyone is different, try it and see how you feel.
- 7. Starting and stopping-** people usually start in September/October, as this is when the sun starts to loose its intensity. Most people find that they can stop using this in April/May as the sun starts to gain its summer intensity.

While I really enjoy my light box, a slightly more expensive, but much more fun alternative is to take a hot winter vacation in January or February each year. Not sure if it's the sunshine or the Pina-colada's but it works great...Aloha!!!

Note: While light boxes have been around for a long time, be sure to read the instructions that come with your light box or contact a health professional if you have any concerns about using one.

Quote to Ponder:

“May the wind always be at your back and the sun upon your face.” - George

“May every sunrise hold more promise, every moonrise hold more peace.” - Anon

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Contact Info: Darren Lang is a Professional Speaker and Trainer who specializes in helping clients reduce stress and stress leave. If you know someone who could benefit from Darren's message at their next conference, quarterly staff meeting or customer appreciation night please ask them to give Darren a call.

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