**“WHAT'S UP WITH THIS FUNKY LIGHT?”**

This is a therapeutic light box used to treat Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). SAD is a form of depression that affects many people who live in the North during the fall and winter months. Usually SAD causes significant distress and often impairs academic, social, and occupational functioning. Essentially, decreasing hours of daylight have an effect on the brain chemistry, and some particularly sensitive individuals will develop depression characterized by **at least** five of the following symptoms:

• Depressed mood most of the day, nearly every day

• Diminished interest or pleasure in most activities nearly every day

• Difficulty sleeping (insomnia) or sleeping excessively

• Changes in appetite, and/or significant weight loss (without dieting) or weight gain

• Poor concentration, inability to think clearly or indecisively

• Feelings of worthlessness or excessive, inappropriate guilt nearly every day

• Fatigue or loss of energy nearly every day

• Recurrent thoughts of death or suicidal thinking

Typically, people who experience SAD begin having symptoms of depression in October and they continue until March or April, when the symptoms often spontaneously stop.

**IF YOU SUSPECT YOU HAVE SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER**

If you think you have SAD, you should seek out professional help in order to get an accurate diagnosis and to develop a plan for treatment that will work for you. ***If you are a student at Gustavus, you are eligible for free, confidential counseling services with licensed psychologists***. To make an appointment, call the Counseling Center at 933-7027 or drop by the office at 204 Johnson Student Union. If you are a faculty or staff member, feel free to call the Counseling Center for off-campus referrals to a professional who can help you.

Often, part of the treatment for SAD involves using a therapeutic light box. The light box emits full-spectrum light that mimics natural sunlight and regular exposure to this type of light has been found to reduce the symptoms of SAD. ***Light therapy is generally only one aspect of treatment for SAD and should not be used to replace counseling or medications***.

HOW TO USE THE LIGHT BOX

• **Sit close to the light**. It should be 18 inches away from your eyes or closer. If it is more than 18 inches away, the light will not be effective. Your eyes will adjust to the brightness and will not be damaged since the light box does not produce UV radiation.

• **Glance at the light for a few seconds twice a minute.** If you look at it more frequently, there is no added benefit nor does it cause any problems.

• **Use the light a minimum of 30 minutes every day to receive benefit.** Ideally, a person with SAD should start using the light box in October (before symptoms begin) and end in March or April (when symptoms stop).

• **The light box is available to all members of the community on a “first-come first-served” basis.** When you are finished, please turn off the light and move to another spot so others can use the light box.

There are currently five therapeutic light boxes in the library. On first, second and third floor you can find one in the first study carrel after the bathrooms. On second and third floor, an additional light box can be found on the opposite side of the library (west side/Beck Hall side).

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