

LIGHT THERAPY OFFERS ALTERNATIVE HEALING

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by *Mary Jo Fay*

From the healing powers of the sun, to the high-tech light energy of the laser, light has made its way into patient care from many directions.

New light therapies can provide help for physiological, emotional, and stress-related issues. Light boxes are available to help those suffering from Seasonal Affective Disorder, or winter depression. Another new light therapy is producing dramatic results for: 1) those with a history of stress and/or trauma, and 2) people who would like to reduce stress, improve their concentration and mental performance, or just function more effectively in their busy lives.

For some, the daily stresses of life are overwhelming but that doesn't mean they need Prozac or a therapist. They are simply searching for a natural way to balance their lives. That's where this new light therapy provides a unique alternative.

Dr. M. Stuart Tessler of Denver is the only fellowship-certified practitioner in Colorado offering this unique therapy to his patients. During his 20 years as an optometrist, Tessler noticed that when using light therapy for specific eye or vision disorders, many reported secondary benefits that went far beyond their eyes or vision. Patients were becoming more relaxed, less stressed, and handled new stress better. They seemed more open, receptive, and capable of change.

"The amazing thing is that many patients often reported changes that neither of us ever anticipated," he says. One woman, who had been unsuccessful at losing weight for years, suddenly started shedding pounds. Another who had struggled to gain weight suddenly did so. Many described feeling less stress and anxiety in their workplace. Even high-functioning people reported greater productivity and satisfaction.

How does this light therapy work? Our minds and bodies respond to physical or mental-emotional stress in precise physiological ways. The nervous system automatically activates defensive reflexes designed to protect us, helping to insure our safety and survival. Typically, our system returns to normal after a challenge has passed. Yet, sometimes, the body remains "stuck" in survival mode, leaving us functioning less efficiently, creating a subconscious resistance to change, and ultimately limiting our options, resources and mindset.

After an initial evaluation, patients are given a simple light device to use in the comfort of their own homes, at their own pace. Specific wavelengths of light are directed gently and comfortably into the eyes, measurably shifting aspects of the "flight or fight" response back toward normal. Whether it's traumas that occurred long ago, or simply the

pressures of daily jobs and busy lives, light therapy acts "like a tune-up", helping people function more easily, less stressfully, and more to their potential.

For those who do not feel comfortable talking about their personal issues with a therapist, light therapy allows them to maintain their safety and privacy. This therapy is not about bringing up painful memories, or even discussing what's on one's mind. It works at a physiological level to reset the nervous system.

As Tessler summarizes, "to whatever degree someone is stuck in 'fight or flight' their nervous system must, by necessity, expend energy and resources to maintain the safety of the status quo. In a complex demanding world, this limits their options and depletes the resources they need to deal with the rigors of everyday life. By resetting those nervous systems, lives can change in a multitude of ways.

As one patient, a 42 year-old single mother and administrator, aptly put it, "I seem to be glowing. I'm functioning easier and better in my world. I am less stressed and handling new stress better. 'Overwhelm' is a thing of the past!"

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