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## Light and Mood – 90% of Us Are Sunlight Deprived and It's Making Us Sick

March 11, 2018

Sharon Selby

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Self-Regulation



Last weekend I had the pleasure of attending TedX Stanley Park, held at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre. I'm going to summarize the main points from two of the presentations: *Light is Life by Sarah Morgan* and *Your Health Is In Your Hands by Claire Snyman*. It's hard to just choose two topics to summarize from all the presentations, but these two complement each other and both create a real "Aha" moment.

### Did you know that 90% of us are sunlight-deprived and it's making us sick? (Sarah Morgan)

All living organisms must have sunlight to live. Sunlight is just as important as food, water, sleep and exercise.

The invention of the light bulb is negatively impacting our Vitamin D, serotonin and melatonin production.

Our circadian rhythm is vitally important to the functioning of each of our cells and through artificial light we are confusing our body's natural physiology.

#### Twitter: @child\_family

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Add the impact of screens to the invention of the light bulb and then we take a step back and realize how out of step with nature we've become! This may sound very obvious but have you thought about the serious negative impacts? The connection between natural light and mood?

Sunlight and darkness trigger the release of important hormones in our brain.

## Sunlight and Mood Disorders

Sunlight is believed to increase the brain's release of the hormone, serotonin which is associated with boosting mood and helping a person feel calm and focused.

At night, darkness trigger the brain to make the hormone, melatonin which is responsible for helping a person feel sleepy and go to sleep. When we are sleep deprived this also impacts mood.

Some researchers are wondering if the large increase of mood disorders (anxiety, depression, bipolar etc.) is connected to our disrupted circadian rhythms as we interfere with the natural cycles of light and darkness through our artificial light sources such as light bulbs and screens. (Sarah Morgan has invented [quantum dot lighting technology](#) to mimic natural light and it is currently being tested in Vancouver City Hall.)

The main message is to spend more time outside in natural light. Even for someone who feels too depressed to walk, sitting outside for 20 minutes/day could elevate one's mood. For everyone, the health benefits of spending time outside are too great to forfeit.

To read more on this topic, [this article](#) is very scientific and explains the relationship of light exposure with brain and mood circuits. This article, [What Are the Benefits of Sunlight?](#) is a lighter read.

Our circadian rhythms are so important that three US geneticists [were awarded the 2017 Nobel Medicine Prize](#) for their research on the biological clock that governs the sleep-wake cycles of most living things.

## What Can We Do to Improve Sleep and Mood?

The bottom line...as families we should be going for walks more often. Light and mood go together. Children should be playing outside more and this is a point in favour for having a trampoline too. I'm very grateful to my Golden Retrievers for getting me outside walking no matter what the weather!

We can also ensure that in the evenings, we have our devices on "nighttime mode" or use the [free software f.lux](#)

As Sarah Morgan said...

*"Light Is Life" ~ Sarah Morgan*

## Your Health Is In Your Hands

Claire Snyman's talk focussed on being an advocate for our own health. She was diagnosed with a brain tumour and would have died if it hadn't been for her and her husband's persistence and vigilance. To read more about her story, you can read her excellent book: [Two Steps Forward](#)

Claire joined Facebook groups supporting people with brain tumours, she researched, and she created the following acronym: TEAM - T (Track your medical records and what doctors say) E (Educate yourself) A (Ask questions) and M (Manage your medications and appointments).

She encouraged everyone to ask for a second opinion when something doesn't feel right and emphasized the importance of connecting, communicating and collaborating with support groups, loved ones and your medical team.

We are responsible for being proactive about our health. As Alexander Pope said, "To err is human". Claire stated that medical errors are the third leading cause of death in Canada, and this

Where are Chloe's paws?  
Having fun in the mud!  
[#goldenthoughts](#)  
<https://t.co/86j74joPzE> 7 days ago

### Products



Surfing The Worry Imp's Wave - Reducing Children's Anxiety

\$39.99

is similar to other countries.

*"Put your health in your own hands." ~ Claire Snyman*

Hope you can enjoy a family walk today :-). Light and Mood go together!

You may also enjoy my previous article: [Popping the Bubble Wrap - Putting Adventure Play Back into Our Children's Lives with Tim Gill.](#)

Warmly,

*Sharon*

PS. For those of you who kindly supported my Kickstarter campaign for my children's anxiety book: *Surfing the Worry Imp's Wave*, deliveries are happening :-). My husband and I are driving or in his case, biking, around making deliveries and the long distance ones are being shipped. The goal is for everyone to have their books by the end of March :-). If you would like to order your copy of: *Surfing the Worry Imp's Wave*, you can do so on the [home page of my website.](#)

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**About the Author**

My name is Sharon Selby B.Ed, M.A. (Counselling Psychology), and I am a Registered Clinical Counsellor and Certified Parent Facilitator.

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