

Out of the blue? How the colour of light could be used to treat mental illness

Level 3: Advanced

Article summary: This article explains the effect of blue light on the body's internal clock and how controlling exposure to blue light can improve mental health.

Time: 60 minutes

Skills: Reading, Speaking

Language focus: Language of cause and effect

Materials needed: One copy of the worksheet per student

6. *anecdotal*
7. *wavelength*
8. *vulnerable*
9. *mounting*
10. *funding*
11. *implement*
12. *circadian*
13. *burden*
14. *occurrence*
15. *disruption*
16. *suppress*
17. *layout*
18. *filters*
19. *trigger*
20. *acute*

1. Warmer

- a. This activity aims to let students discuss the effect that our phone screens and the blue light that they emit can have on our sleep and how we feel. Ask them to share personal examples of when their mood has been affected by a bad night's sleep. If possible, explore what caused them to have a bad night's sleep. End by having students consider the effect of design on mental health and how elements such as light, colour and the way a room is organised can affect mood. Encourage them to think of as many examples as possible and not to rule them out.

2. Key words

- a. Ask students to do this task individually and then compare their answers in pairs or small groups. As an extension activity, ask students to highlight the key words in the article.

Key:

1. *psychiatrist*
2. *melatonin*
3. *spectrum*
4. *intervention*
5. *aggression*

- b. Before reading the article carefully, students use the key words to fill the gaps in the sentences to ensure that they know how the words are used in other contexts.

Key:

1. *wavelength*
2. *vulnerable*
3. *occurrence*
4. *anecdotal*
5. *burden*
6. *acute*
7. *psychiatrist*
8. *filter*
9. *implement*
10. *layout*
11. *spectrum*
12. *melatonin*
13. *funding*
14. *disruption*
15. *mounting*
16. *aggression*
17. *suppress*
18. *trigger*
19. *intervention*
20. *circadian*

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3. Comprehension check

- a. Students answer the questions based on the information in the article. Encourage the students to answer in complete sentences, e.g. in item 2, they may say, *Circadian disruption is linked to depression, cardiovascular disease, dementia and mental illness.*

Key:

Suggested answers:

1. *It changes to a soft amber glow and removes blue light in the evening.*
2. *It is linked to depression, cardiovascular disease, dementia and mental illness*
3. *Because light can affect their mood and may trigger manic episodes, especially with seasonal changes.*
4. *Evening light delays the body clock, suppresses melatonin and makes people sleep later and worse.*
5. *Poor sleep can disrupt daily routines and may trigger mood problems.*
6. *One ward used special lighting that removed blue light in the evening, while the other used normal hospital lighting.*
7. *They showed changes in melatonin levels, sleep patterns and alertness.*
8. *Patients showed greater clinical improvement and less aggressive behaviour, although their length of stay was similar.*
9. *Because patients do not need to do anything extra; the treatment is built into the environment.*
10. *It could help people in care homes (or other environments) by improving sleep, reducing anxiety and supporting better behaviour.*

4. Key language

- a. This activity helps students express the relationship between different elements and the effect they have. As an extension activity, ask students to examine the content in which these examples are used in the article.

Key:

1. *interfere with*
2. *delays*
3. *suppresses*
4. *governs*
5. *trigger*

- b. Students match the expressions for cause and effect with their definitions. This will provide them with even more expressions to use. Explore the difference in meaning between these expressions and the ones they learnt previously.

Key:

1. *c*
2. *e*
3. *a*
4. *d*
5. *b*

- c. Students complete the sentences using the expressions from tasks a and b.

Key:

1. *bring about*
2. *contribute to*
3. *encourage*
4. *result in*
5. *stem from*
6. *delay*
7. *govern*
8. *interfere with*
9. *suppress*
10. *trigger*

5. Discussion

- a. Students discuss the statements related to the article and give their reasons and justifications for each answer, referring to their own experiences wherever possible.

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6. In your own words

- a. Ask students to read the description of the use of colour for mental well-being and identify the colours being described. The answers are not definitive and only illustrate the typical feelings that people have about these feelings. It would be good to encourage the students to explain their reasons for their choice of colours.

Key:

Suggested answers:

1 and 2 blue / green

3, 4 and 5 red / orange / yellow

- b. Students think about how someone's mental well-being might be affected by the different forms of interior decoration. If possible, have students research more information about these examples.

- c. Students then design the perfect space for their mental well-being. Depending on time, you may choose to have students describe it, draw it or even design it digitally. As they work on their designs, ask them to consider how each of the forms of interior decoration would affect them. Have them refer to their ideas in task b to help them. Encourage students to include the language of cause and effect. Remind them that the example in task a is there to support them.
- d. Students present their ideas to the group. Have students discuss which of the examples from the group appealed to them the most and why.