

WINTER BLUES

COPING WITH SEASONAL DEPRESSION



Kinwell

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Group Agreements

- Arrive on time, let facilitator know of planned absences
- Keep group confidential
- Silence cell phones, close other distractions
- Bring an attitude of acceptance and non-judgment for self and others
- Group is an “open” format, meaning people may join throughout the series
- Respond with chat box and emojis
- Stay on mute unless speaking to the group
- Be on camera

What to Expect

Week 1: Introductions, Learn about SAD, Explore your seasonal patterns

Week 2: Circadian rhythm, Light therapy

Week 3: Mindset, thoughts & beliefs about winter; Challenging automatic thoughts

Week 4: Special guest Valerie Wintler, ARNP, joins us to talk about biological aspects of SAD, medications and supplements that help / don't help.

Week 5: Lifestyle supports: diet, exercise and substances; Stress management; Community and social engagement

Week 6: Create your individualized Winter Blues survival plan



Light Therapy

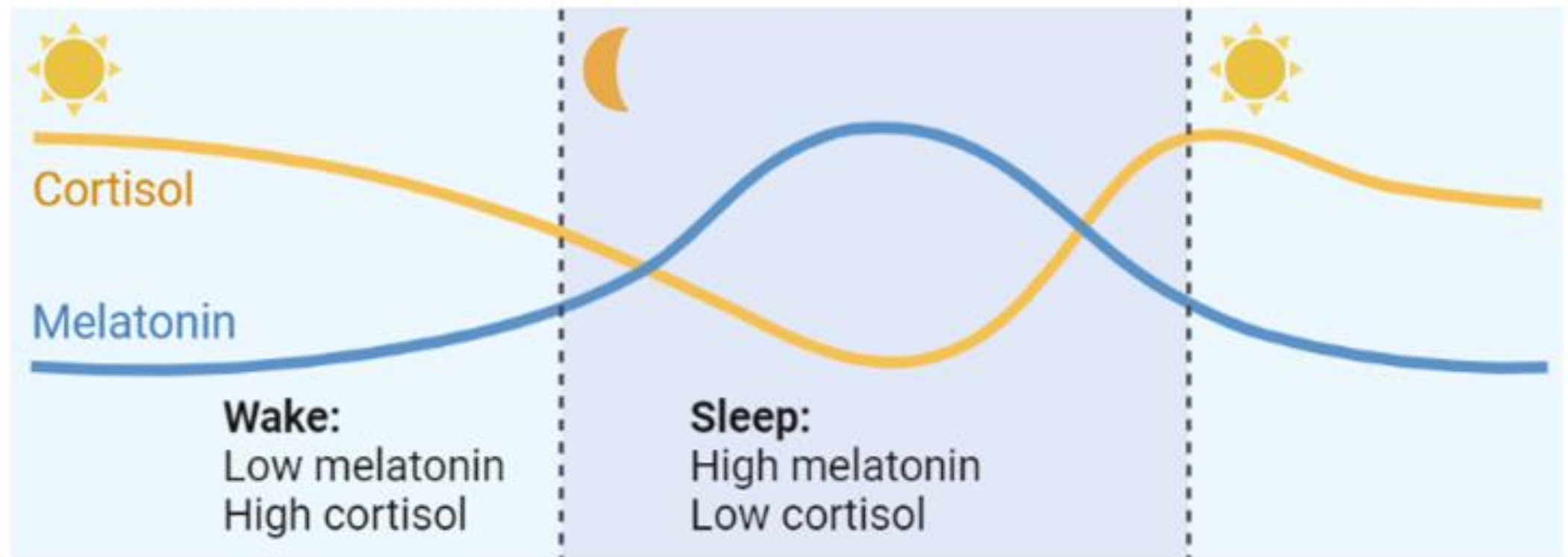
Circadian Rhythm

The later sunrise in winter causes circadian rhythms to drift out of phase with the sleep/wake cycle

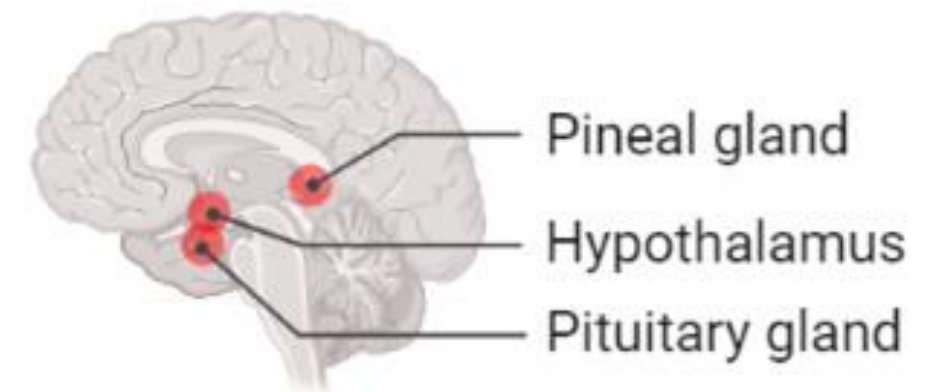


Circadian rhythm is part of the body's **internal clock**; it follows a 24-hour schedule and regulates the sleep-wake cycle.

During the 24-hour cycle, our hormone levels fluctuate in response to light, particularly **melatonin** and **cortisol**.



Regions of the brain that regulate the circadian rhythm include **pineal gland**, **hypothalamus** and **pituitary gland**.



The Role of Sunlight

- Less exposure to sunlight can cause:
 - Lower levels of serotonin, which affects mood
 - Vitamin D deficiency, which promotes serotonin activity
 - Too much melatonin production, a hormone that regulates the sleep-wake cycle

Light Therapy's Antidepressant Effect

- Resynchronizes the circadian rhythm, which is often delayed in people with SAD
 - Normalizes sleep patterns
 - Increases daytime activity and energy
 - Improves sleep efficiency
- Modulates mood through neural pathways
 - Serotonin and dopamine (important neurotransmitters for mood)
 - hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal axis (how the body responds to stress)



Light Therapy

- Helps 60-80% of people with SAD
- Best started at first signs of SAD (as early as September)
- Some insurance will reimburse you for these devices with a doctor's note
- You may be able to purchase with funds from your HSA/FSA plan, if you have one

Light Therapy

- Pick a light that has UV filtering
- 10,000 lux brightness
- Bigger is better (1 ft. sq.), but anything is better than nothing
- Recommend white light (not blue light)
- LED or fluorescent bulbs, not incandescents

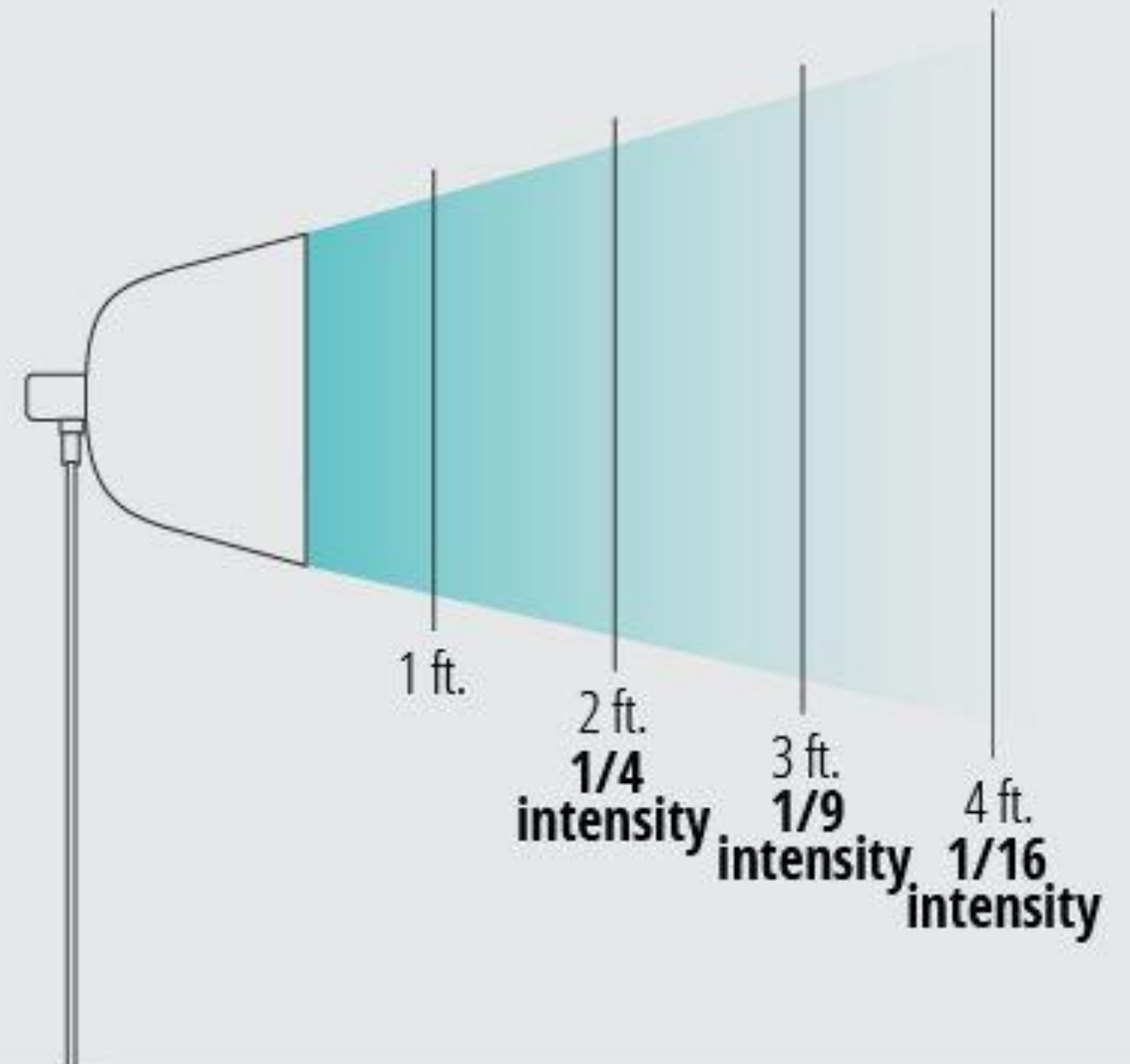


How to Use Light Therapy

- Sit close, facing the light, less than 12" from light source (follow manufacturer's directions)
- Start with 20 minutes/day and adjust from there
- Use before 8AM and adjust from there
- Best to have the light slightly above you to reduce glare
- Have your eyes open
- If it doesn't help after 2 weeks of daily use, talk to your therapist or medical provider

INVERSE SQUARE LAW

If you increase distance from a light source, the light intensity will decrease by the square of the distance.



Risks of Light Therapy

- **Generally very low risk**, especially compared with medications or no treatment.
- Don't look directly into the light, can cause eyestrain or headache. Rarely, light therapy can cause anxiety or problems with sleep.
- Rarely, light therapy can lead to hypomania, especially if you have been diagnosed with bipolar disorder in the past.
 - If you have bipolar disorder, talk to your care team about safe use of light therapy.
- People with eye diseases like macular degeneration, glaucoma or cataracts should be cleared by their ophthalmologist before starting

Dawn Simulators

- Gradually increasing light early in the morning, simulates a sunrise
- Good evidence it helps, but may be less helpful than standard light therapy.
- Lower maximum lux (~300 lux)



Outdoor Light

- Try to get outdoor light every day in the fall and winter
 - Peak outdoor light around lunchtime is best





Indoor Light





Winter Trip to See the Sun

Next week...

- How thoughts about winter impact our emotions
- Challenging automatic negative thoughts

