

# Upfront: Feeling fine thanks to an anti-SAD lightbox

After years of suffering from the midwinter blues, they suddenly disappeared – at the flick of a switch

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Seething global discontent and misery aside, there is something oddly reassuring about this winter being properly wintry. After years of unseasonable globally warmed balminess, I've been welded to my stock of Uniqlo cashmere for a month now, while the kids are finally discovering, for the first time in their lives, that hats and gloves are not simply objects of baffling pointlessness provided by one's fussy helicopter parent in order to be lost as swiftly as possible, preferably in new and amusing ways - down rabbit holes, inside supermarket freezer cabinets - but actually have a point to them.

I remember often being cold as a child, as in frost-on-the-inside-of-your-bedroom-window, too-cold-to-get-up-in-the-night-to-go-to-the-loo, curls-of-warm-breath-rising-from-beneath-the-blankets cold. Central heating? Do me a favour. Home was cold, school was cold, all points in between were cold. Cold was just the way things were between November and April. End of.

Part of me thinks that losing touch with our native northern hemispheric cold has helped us forget who we are, that living behind hermetically sealed UPVC with the heating on 24/7 has, aside from bankrupting us and depleting our natural resources, turned us into wusses. Do chilblains even exist any more? Anyway, some self-flagellatory part of me still insists on an open window at night. Just an inch, mind, to keep me in touch with out there. But I wouldn't do it to the kids.

Ironically, given that my room was colder than either of theirs, last night both of them ended up in my bed ("I'm cold, Mummy"), but it was lovely. One day they'll stop doing it and I'll miss it, so I carried the Dickensian theme as far as porridge for breakfast this morning and thermal vests under school uniforms, accessorised by gloves on strings. Getting back in touch with the subtle nuances of weather is one of the thrills of living by the sea and away from a city where weather is just the thing that follows The News. So, yeah, I'm down with the cold, but I'm also sadder than SAD without light.

At midday today, a 40-watt sun hid behind its cumulus duvet. Normally I would want to be back in bed and, depending on my reading matter, weeping quietly about either Jade Goody or Gaza while surrounded by a Jenga-style pile of complex carbohydrates, but today I'm kind of, well, fine, thanks to my new Litebook Elite TM ("The light you need every day"), which was a Christmas present (thanks, Dad) and is fabulous.

I've wanted an anti-SAD lightbox for years, but despite knowing that every winter my hypothalamus books itself a holiday in the Caribbean and invites my pineal gland along, inexplicably another pair of Georgina Goodman shoes invariably got there first.

I haven't a clue what is so great about the Litebook's "white LED with a custom lens diffusion system" or what "light identical to peak waves of sunlight (460nm, in the blue range, with the second peak at 550nm, in the green part of the spectrum)" actually

means, but I do know that it is currently lunchtime, and contrary to my traditional patterns of winter grazing I am not only choosing to eat an edamame and butterbean salad instead of a Haribo and peanut-butter club sandwich with a side-order of Twix-burger, and enjoying it, but I'm not even eating it in bed. Apparently, if I keep this up for a couple of months, I will feel not only "content and energised" but my tax return will magic itself into existence, my youngest son will be potty trained overnight and I will meet the love of my life. Who could ask for more?

There is a potential downside, however: "on very rare occasions and usually only with overuse, less than 1% of users may experience mania", but given that this is a fairly accurate description of the feeling I get when I eat my body weight in chocolate before drowning out the guilt with a pint or two of cabernet sauvignon, OD-ing on LEDs is a risk I'm prepared to take - even if (Here comes the sun! Tralala-la!) a "content and energised" K Flett turns out to be indistinguishable from (a slightly slimmer) Keith Chegwin.

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