

# Color therapy in mental health and well being



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Color therapy is the use of color in a variety of ways to promote health and healing. The different colors we see in the world around us are the result of the eye perceiving light vibrating at different frequencies. Sunlight, or full-spectrum light, holds all the wavelengths of color in the visible spectrum (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet, and magenta) as well as infrared and ultraviolet light, which cannot be seen. Used to treat both physical and emotional problems, color therapy may involve exposure to colored lights, massages using color-saturated oils, contemplating and visualizing colors, even wearing colored clothing and eating colored foods.

Not surprisingly, color has played a role in healing for centuries. At the temple of Heliopolis in ancient Egypt, patients were treated in rooms specifically designed to break up the sun's rays into the colors of the spectrum. People also made regular pilgrimages to the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, one of the seven wonders of the world, to take advantage of the healing colors of the exotic plants and flowers found there. In India, practitioners of Ayurveda (now the oldest health-care system in the world), taught that specific colors corresponded with each of the seven chakras, the energy centers that represent organs, emotions, and aspects of the spirit. (Today Ayurvedic medicine continues to use color today to treat a wide range of mental and physical imbalances.)

It wasn't until the late 17th century, however, that modern-day color theory was born. when English philosopher and mathematician Sir Isaac Newton conducted his prism experiments and showed that light is truly a mixture of colors from the visible spectrum.

Although doctors used color to treat everything from psychological problems to smallpox over the next hundred years, interest in color's effects on healing didn't really pick up until 1878, when Dr. Edwin D. Babbitt published his book *Principles of Light and Color*. Here he described his work in chromatotherapy (healing with colored lights), suggesting it as a treatment for a variety of ailments, including burns, nervous excitability, and cold in the extremities.

Probably the most extensive and detailed work on colored light therapy, however, was done by Dr. Dinshah P. Ghadiali (1873-1966), a naturalized American from India, who had studied Babbitt's work. The doctor spent many years researching the effects of color on disease and developing colored filters. In 1920, he introduced a system of colored lights, which he sold under the name "Spectro-Chrome" lamps. Touted as a treatment for such diseases as diabetes, tuberculosis, and chronic gonorrhoea, the healing lamps were considered preposterous by many M. D. s and miraculous by others who claimed success with them. Although controversial (Dinshah spent much time in court defending his product), his work continues to inspire many color therapists today.

In 1947, Swiss psychologist Dr. Max Lüscher introduced the Lüscher Color Test, a form of color therapy still widely used by many psychologists. The test consists of choosing 43 colors from a total of 73 possibilities, although there are simpler variations. By observing the colors a person chooses or rejects, the therapist can learn a good deal about a subject's psychological state. For example, if a person selects darker colors, it suggests a need for rest and stress reduction.

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At about the same time, Russian researcher S. V. Krakov was conducting a series of experiments in which he separated the different wavelengths in the light spectrum to show how color can affect the nervous system. He observed that red light stimulated the adrenal glands, raising blood pressure and pulse rate, and that blue and white light had a calming effect. Although there are still no rigorous studies supporting Krakov's work, many practitioners today commonly recommend color therapy for stress and for stress-related pain.

In recent years interest in color therapy has grown as studies have shown the positive effects of full-spectrum light on seasonal affective disorder (SAD) and other forms of depression. Mainstream researchers are looking into its use for a variety of other ailments as well, from sleep disorders to hormonal problems.

#### PRINCIPLES IN COLOR THERAPY:

Color has such a subtle effect on our lives that we rarely give it a second thought. Color comes from daylight which contains all eight colors of the spectrum: red, orange, yellow, green, turquoise, blue, violet and magenta. It is also a form of radiation.

Research has begun to validate the importance of color in treating disease. For example, looking at blue light has been shown to lower blood pressure by calming the autonomic nervous system, while red light causes it to rise.

Each color is associated with one of the seven chakras of the body, and every color has its complementary color. Single colors or combinations of

complementary colors can be used to treat imbalances in the chakras or illness associated with that bodily region.

We will examine how the various colors affect us. We will cover all spectrum colors as well as some useful combinations.

## **How Colors Affect Us?**

### **Physical**

Restful

Green, Light Blue

Revitalizing

Orange

Stimulating

Red

### **Emotional**

Restful

Sky Blue, Turquoise

Revitalizing

Peach

Stimulating

Orange

## **Mental**

Restful

Indigo

Revitalizing

Emerald Green

Stimulating

Yellow

## **Spiritual**

Restful

Blue

Revitalizing

Gold

Stimulating

Violet, Purple

The human body absorbs light that is made up of the color spectrum. Each color in the spectrum has a frequency, wavelength and energy associated with it. The colors we absorb can have an effect on the nervous system, the endocrine system and subsequently on the release of hormones and other organic substances within the human body. They can also have an effect on

the more subtle energies of the chakra system. This may affect our mental, emotional, psychological and physical states of health.

The symptoms of disease are a sign that there is a shortage of, or improper utilization of color and light in the cells and organs of the human body. This may be due to factors such as our lifestyle, our environment, stress or too much, or too little of a particular color frequency in our energy system. This imbalance can be corrected by the selective use of color frequencies. The forms by which the frequencies of color can be transmitted to the body are numerous.

#### COLORS FOR STRESS MANAGEMENT:

The energy relating to each of the seven spectrum colors of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet, resonates with the energy of each of the seven main chakras/energy centres of the body. If you can imagine the chakras as a set of cogs/wheels, they are rather like the workings of a clock or an engine; each cog/wheel needs to move smoothly for the clock/engine to work properly. Thus good health and wellbeing is achieved by a balance of all these energies. Balance of the energy in each of the body's chakras is very important for health and wellbeing. Color therapy can help to re-balance and/or stimulate these energies by applying the appropriate color to the body and therefore re-balance our chakras.

Red relates to the base chakra, orange the sacral chakra, yellow the solar plexus chakra, green the heart chakra, blue the throat chakra, indigo the brow chakra (sometimes referred to as the third eye) and violet relates to the crown chakra.

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Color is absorbed by the eyes, skin, skull our ' magnetic energy field' or aura and the energy of color affects us on all levels, that is to say, physical, spiritual and emotional. Every cell in the body needs light energy - thus color energy has widespread effects on the whole body. There are many different ways of giving color, including; Solarized Water, Light boxes/lamps with color filters, color silks and hands on healing using color.

Colour therapy can be shown to help on a physical level, which is perhaps easier to quantify, however there are deeper issues around the colors on the psychological and spiritual levels. Our wellbeing is not, of course, purely a physical issue. Fortunately, many more practitioners, both orthodox and complementary are now treating patients in an holistic manner. That is to say, we are body, mind and spirit and none of these areas function entirely alone; each has an effect upon the other. This is why Colour Therapy can be so helpful since colour addresses all levels of our being.

#### HOW CAN COLOR THERAPY HELP?

When we think of coloring, we connect to the innocence of childhood and a time when we weren't burdened by responsibility and expectation

You could think of coloring as letting your inner child come out and have a fun time, or you could think of this activity as a form of meditation.

Color Therapy can move the stuck energy so that your rainbow colors are bright again. This means your body can be healthy.

Complementary Color Therapy can move stuck energy through visualization and breathing techniques.

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Deeper levels of this therapy also address emotions and patterns of thought that keep recreating the stuck energy.

We often wear clothes that reflect our moods. The color of the clothes we wear can alter the way we feel. Wear bright clothes to counteract depression, lack of self-confidence, or low self-esteem. Wear calming colors to suppress irritability or stress.

You can also decorate your home to take advantage of color. For example, a new bedspread or pillow covers, a new lampshade, or a new set of drapes to take advantage of the needed color can make a great deal of difference in your mood.

#### MY OPINION:

As part of self-expression, color communicates something about your personality. The effect of color in our lives can be mystical, psychological and even functional.

I think Color therapy is a great stress management process and is simple enough to be usable at your workplace.

Color has a profound affect on my mood and emotion, and we find some colors depressing and others uplifting. The way we deal with stress and our feelings are directly affected by our hormones as well as the brain chemicals circulating in our body. Colored light travels to the pituitary, the master gland of the endocrine system, affecting our entire metabolism. Our mental state is also directly related to the quality of the light we receive through our eyes. Certain colors calm our minds, while other stimulate mental activity.

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Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is now well documented and light treatments are used successfully in alleviating many systems such as depression, nausea, mood swings, lethargy and general exhaustion.