

# Light on Life and Love

We are not as far from caves and forests as we thought. The sun our ancestors worshipped does indeed control us; scientists report that humans, even after adapting for centuries to dim city life, secrete a hormone called melatonin in response to levels of natural light. According to the seasons, our bodies signal solar deprivation through changes in mood, bodily functions and fertility.

Perhaps these scientists should start talking to architects and engineers. For one of the most widely advertised triumphs of modern times has been the creation of a totally artificial, climate-controlled environment. Technology has challenged the earth's rhythms for ever-larger buildings and greater corporate gain and glory. Freed from the need for natural light and air, which once restricted all construction, modern builders can now ignore all rational limitations on size. Architects dream of monuments, investors of unlimited square footage. And only office workers dream, like the prisoner of Reading Gaol, of a small patch of sky.

It has been found that Finland's 20-hour, sunlit summer days dramatically increase conception; depression disappears with springtime. But there is no spring in skyscrapers. We are still creatures of circadian cycles.

So now what? Tasteful little signs in the lobby saying "This building can be injurious to your health?" Malpractice suits against architects and owners who assault human physiology? Apparently much more rides on New York's zoning regulations, which attempt to insure light and air, than even their authors know.

Pending relief, the experts offer some advice: Spend more time outdoors; open curtains and windows (assuming windows are operable); reproduce ultraviolet and infrared rays with more expensive lighting that approximates the sun's spectrum.

And, one might add, let those master builders, or tinkerers, cultivate humility. Life cycles still belong to the mysteries of the universe. We are still only as happy and procreative as the day is long.