



SLEEP YOUR WAY TO SUCCESS

A Guide To The Many
Benefits Of A Good Night
Sleep

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***Sleeping your way
To
Success***

Table of Contents

Introduction

The basics of sleep

Women and sleep

Why is sleep so important

What happens when you do not get enough sleep?

Sleeping your way to success

Introduction

It's time to really wake up and take your sleep seriously! Yes - sleep is serious matter and should be treated as such. This resource aims to take a holistic view of sleeping and why it is so important.

When you consider the fact that one in three persons on the planet is not getting enough sleep, you begin to see there is a serious problem, and it is only sleeping that can solve it.

The sound of the alarm clock is very familiar to most of us. But what that awful, jarring sound does is stop the single most important biological experience that we can have, and that is sleep.

Fun fact: The average human will spend approximately one-third of their lives asleep.

If we are lucky enough to reach the age of 75, that will mean we will have spent nearly 25 years asleep. What that tells us is that sleep, at some level, is important to us; yet for most of us, we do not give sleep a second thought.

Many famous people have been renowned for not sleeping much at all. Winston Churchill was famous for his catnaps, and Margaret Thatcher's infamous quote: "Sleep is for the wimps", quickly comes to mind. A short trek into the not so distant past, and you will find Thomas Edison's quote stating something along similar lines: "Sleep is a criminal waste of time, and a heritage from our cave days". These are some are superstars we are modelling our sleep patterns after.

Therefore, sleep has often been considered a vice, especially because it takes so much time to get it. In today's fast-paced world where we barely have time for ourselves, we want to spend as little time as possible on sleep. After all, many the top achievers get away with a few hours of sleep per night, so many of us feel if we want to get to their level, we must cut down on sleep. Right? Maybe not!

Thomas Dekker, the English Dramatist, famously said: "Sleep is the golden chain that ties health and our bodies together". This is absolutely the truth.

The basics of sleep

First, what is sleep?

Sleep is a physiological process common to animals and humans. It is a state where awareness of environmental stimuli is reduced. Sleep, in this case, is different to being in a coma, hibernation or death, because it can be rapidly reversed.

Sleep is often seen as a time when the body is inactive. In fact, the opposite is true. Sleep is an active, important and involuntary process, and with a lack of sleep we can't carry out duties effectively. As a rule, sleep is for the brain, allowing it to recuperate and regenerate. Sleep is not a lifestyle choice, but a necessity.

It is essential for us to better understand the process of sleep, and this will prove that quality sleep is not a luxury but a necessity. When we go to sleep the brain doesn't shut down, which is contrary to common belief. In fact, neuroscientists have shown that some areas of the brain are more active during the sleep state than they are during the wake state.

In our brains we have 'The Alertness Centre' – which keeps us awake, and 'The Sleep Centre' – which puts us to sleep. For the sleep centre to dominate the alertness centre, we need to be tired, calm and relaxed, our brain not to be active, and a quiet and dark environment, which is also comfortable and at the right temperature. These are the preconditions of sleep. The presence of external stimuli like light, noise, and worrying, activate the alertness centre of the brain and this dissuades us from sleeping.

Sleep has several phases to it; it is, therefore, interesting to check out the different phases of sleep:

Stage W (Wakefulness)**Stage N1 (NREM 1)****Stage N2 (NREM 2)****Stage N3 (NREM 3)****Stage R (REM)**

NREM – Non-REM sleep

REM - Rapid Eye Movement

During the process of an eight-hour sleep period, a healthy sleeper should cycle through the various sleep stages every 90 minutes or so.

Stage N1 (NREM1) This is like the moment of inertia - there is the need to sleep, but then the forces of sleep and wakefulness are at war. It is normal to have the onset of a dream at this stage of sleep. Also, the most minute disturbance can cause wakefulness.

Once Stage 1 is attained and stability is achieved, Stage N2 starts. At this stage, the breathing and heart rate slow down, and this stage can last for up to the total time spent asleep.

Next comes Stage N3. This stage is often referred to as Delta sleep or the slow-wave sleep. This is because slow delta brain waves are recorded during this cycle and is the stage where the body undergoes the process of regeneration. During this cycle, the body heals components that have been used during the day.

The amount of N3 sleep decreases over the years, and elderly people may have no substantial N3 sleep. This may help to explain aging in adults.

Stage R is referred to as REM cycle or more commonly as the “rapid eye movement” sleep. The first stage of REM sleep will usually happen around the 90th to the 110th minute of falling asleep, while cycling back every 90 minutes. The REM sleep cycle is

the cycle of dreams; it is the land where dreams occur. It is normal to have irregular heartbeat and breathing patterns during REM sleep. During REM sleep, the brain is active and although the eyes are closed, they move rapidly.

If you remember that you have a dream, it is because the dream is a REM dream. The body must produce chemicals that render it temporarily paralyzed in order to prevent us from acting out our dreams. Unfortunately, this inadvertently still happens sometimes.

Knowing what happens when we sleep is an interesting peek into a world that is seemingly beyond us.

Women and sleep

A woman's sleep changes over time with ageing and in certain circumstances. Changing hormone levels associated with the menstrual cycle, pregnancy, menopause and post-menopause can affect the quality of a woman's sleep. Young adult women would usually have the highest quality sleep. Older women get less deep sleep and are more likely to have nighttime awakenings. Women are particularly at risk for sleep disorders and are more likely to develop sleep apnea during pregnancy and after menopause.

Women often report disrupted sleep a week prior to their menses (period) and during menses. This is due to changes in the levels of the hormones progesterone and estrogen that can lead to menstrual symptoms such as cramping, moodiness, cravings, and irritability. During the menstrual period, it is common to have an increase in nighttime awakenings and an increase in vivid dreams. Normally, these sleep problems resolve after the start of the period, though some women may have continuing sleep problems such as insomnia. Hormone therapy may help improve a woman's sleep and the various symptoms associated with sleep disorders. It is better if this therapy is undertaken using natural remedies though, as these cause less side effects.

How does pregnancy affect a woman's sleep?

About 66% to 94% of pregnant women report some form of sleep change during pregnancy. A woman's sleep may vary in pregnancy as follows:

The first and second trimester of pregnancy: During the first and second trimester, hormonal changes include an increase in the level of progesterone, which can greatly reduce the quality of sleep. Women are often more tired during the day and often feel the increased need for sleep.

Third trimester of pregnancy: Women tend to have a poor quality of sleep in the late stages of pregnancy. Pregnancy leads to an increase in time spent in light sleep; conversely, there is a decrease in the amount of deep sleep, and a decrease in dream sleep (REM sleep).

There can be an increase in nighttime awakenings and a decrease in total sleep time. General pregnancy symptoms can lead to poor sleep in the late stages of pregnancy. These can include body aches/cramps, Restless Leg Syndrome, being uncomfortable in certain positions, heartburn, the baby's movements, the need to urinate during the night, and worrying.

There can also be challenges with sleep for a new mother after having her baby. After giving birth, the baby's feeding and sleeping schedule place more stress upon the mother.

Why is sleep so important?

If sleep is a fundamental human process, what makes it so important? Why is it that so many of us are not sleeping enough? Sleep is so important: therefore, we are going to check out what makes it so.

Why do we sleep?

1) Oswald's Restoration Theory– The theory suggests that the energy we burn up during the day is restored and rebuilt during the night as we sleep. We know that stages 3 and 4 of NREM sleep enable body repair and REM enables the brain to recover. What reinforces this idea is that for most of us, we are tired at the end of the day and are craving sleep. So, this idea sounds perfectly plausible!

2) Energy Conservation Theory – The theory assumes that we sleep to save calories. However, when you do the sums it equates to approximately 100 calories saved per night, which is the equivalent of a slice of bread! As a result, I am less convinced by this theory.

3) Brain Function – What has been shown is that if people are taught a task and then deprived of sleep, they struggle to recall the task at a later stage. Sleeping at night increases creativity, and the ability to find solutions to difficult scenarios. When we sleep, our brain has the time to go over the things taught and solidify the experience.

We sleep for a multitude of different reasons - but sleep is not an indulgence, it is a necessity. What we do know is that during sleep we process information, consolidate memories and undergo several maintenance processes that help us function during the daytime. Sleep allows us to achieve overall better health, and a lack of sleep is associated with the development of a number of ill-health conditions.

There are also numerous mental benefits including having clearer thinking during the day, enhancing mood, relieving stress and improving memory and concentration levels. In fact, it is estimated that to have one hour of extra sleep equates to approximately a

25% increase in productivity. Not getting enough sleep may lead to the use of caffeine and other stimulants to maintain wakefulness but this forms a vicious cycle, as these substances often prevent us from sleeping later in the day, or having difficulty falling asleep when it is bedtime.

Dreams and sleep

Dreams are a fundamental part of sleep and for so long, science has struggled to understand them. Dreams are storylines that our mind creates while we sleep. Dreams can be vivid and can even make you feel emotional; this feeling could be joy, sadness or it could even be loneliness, and your dreams may seem confusing or perfectly rational. Sometimes, our dreams are just a repetition of what we did during the day. What is interesting is that the prefrontal cortex (the area of the brain that controls reasoning) shuts down during REM sleep, so you don't question illogical parts of dreams.

Dreams can happen anytime during the sleep cycle - however, the most vivid dreams occur during REM sleep when the brain is loaded with activity. Some neuroscientists believe we dream at least four to six times per night, however, a large number of us will experience 'Emotional Intensification' or 'Amnesia' after sleeping, which results in us forgetting approximately 95% of our dreams.

What happens when you do not get enough sleep?

In today's world when we usually don't get enough sleep, what risks are we running? What is going to happen if you are not getting the right amount of sleep?

1. You get sick

Losing sleep can impair your body's ability to fight off sickness and easier to fall ill.

Researchers even uncovered a reciprocal relationship between sleep and your immune system. You may lose additional sleep while your body fights off a bug, if you get sick and haven't had enough shut eye.

2. Your heart suffers

Both short sleep duration (less than 5 hours per night) and long sleep durations (9 or more hours per night) have been shown to have a negative impact on heart health, according to an analysis published in the European Heart Journal.

In particular, your chances of developing coronary heart disease or having a stroke are greatly increased with less sleep.

3. Your cancer risk increases

Shortened sleep is associated with higher rates of breast cancer, colorectal cancer, and prostate cancer, according to the AASM's sleep statement.

Overnight shift workers may take the brunt of this burden. The good news is that both men and women who have slept 7 or more hours per night, had the best mortality rates in the group.

4. You cannot think properly

Even missing one night of sleep can lead to some major cognition (thinking) issues. In a study published by Experimental Brain Research, a group of 18 men was given a task to complete. The first task was completed following a full night's sleep. The next task was completed after skipping a night of sleep.

Brain functions including memory, decision-making, reasoning, and problem-solving worsened, along with reaction time and alertness.

5. You forget stuff

Not only can missed sleep make you more forgetful, but there's also a growing body of research indicating that sleep has an impact on learning and memory.

Researchers suggest that sleep is critical to the process of consolidating the things we learn in the brain. In other words, we need proper rest to lock in new information and commit it to memory.

6. Your libido diminishes

Not getting enough sleep could reduce your sex drive.

In one study, young women who lost sleep over a one-week period showed a decrease in their oestrogen levels. Sleeping 5 or fewer hours reduced sex hormone levels by as much as 10 to 15 percent.

The women also reported that their overall mood and vigour declined with each consecutive night of interrupted rest.

7. You get depressed

The link between sleep and mood has been established over and over again by researchers and doctors. For example, people with insomnia have greater levels of depression and anxiety than those who sleep normally. They are 10 times as likely to have clinical depression, and 17 times as likely to have clinical anxiety. The more a person cannot have adequate night rest, and the more frequently they wake at night as a result, the higher the chances of developing depression.

8. Your risk of diabetes increases

Along with a bigger waistline and increased visceral fat – the most dangerous form of fat that sits around our organs and across our belly - people who don't get enough sleep increase their risk of developing adult-onset diabetes.

Researchers examined 10 separate studies focused on sleep and diabetes. Their findings uncovered that 7 to 8 hours of rest is the optimal range to avoid the insulin issues that could lead to diabetes.

9. You are more accident-prone

You are three times more likely to be involved in a car accident if you get 6 or fewer hours of sleep each night, according to the National Sleep Foundation.

The most vulnerable people are shift workers, commercial drivers, business travellers, and anyone else working long or odd hours. Think twice before getting behind the wheel if you are not sleeping enough.

10. Your skin suffers

If all of these health risks do not convince you to get more sleep, do it for your looks.

In one study, a group of people between the ages of 30 and 50 were evaluated based on their sleep habits and the condition of their skin. The results revealed that those with too little sleep had more fine lines, wrinkles, uneven skin colour, and marked looseness of the skin.

Getting enough beauty sleep is not just for the sake of your vanity, and to help support your ego. It could help to save your life.

Sleeping your way to success

Although most people need seven to nine hours of sleep each night to function well the next day, the National Sleep Foundation (NSF) 2005 NSF *Sleep in America* poll of all adults revealed that women are more likely than men to have difficulty with getting the needed amount of sleep, both in length and quality and to experience more daytime sleepiness at least a few nights/days a week. Research has shown that lack of quality sleep results in daytime sleepiness, increased risk of accidents, having problems concentrating, poor performance on the job and in school, and possibly, increased sickness and weight gain.

Not only is getting the right amount of sleep important, the quality of the sleep cannot be overemphasized. All these must be drawn into context, given the biological conditions

unique only to women. Factors like the menstrual cycle, pregnancy, and menopause, can affect the quality and the length of sleep a woman gets in a lifetime. The continually changing levels of hormones a woman experiences as a result of the activities happening to her internally, throughout the month and over her lifetime, especially her estrogen and progesterone levels, have an impact on her sleep. Gaining an understanding of how these hormones work, coupled with their environmental factors and lifestyle habits, can help women strike a much greater balance, and this will help them enjoy a good night's sleep.

A lot of women feel that not getting enough sleep is the way to success. The opposite is true. It is far wiser to sleep your way to success. If you think getting enough sleep is a luxury, you need to reassess that notion.

Sleep is a necessity, and when you have enough of it, you will discover that it is very much part of the pathway becoming and being at your best. When you get enough sleep, you will find out it is the very cornerstone to success. When you can average seven hours of sleep, you will find it so much easier to achieve every of your goals.

This is because when you get enough sleep, you are healthy, and you are ready to kick your goals and hit your targets, one at a time. More sleep, not less sleep is the way to achieve success. If you don't want to fall into depression or have issues with your health, you really should do all you can to get enough sleep.

Not only is sleep healthy, but there is also a school of thought that believes, when we sleep and dream, our mind does not know the difference between reality and our imagination. This implies that our sleep time can also be used as a platform to reinforce our imagination, and to help create the reality we want to see. Some say: "I will believe it when I see it". The truth is the opposite: "When you believe it, you will see it".

Knowing all the good that sleep can do for you as a person, especially as a woman, it is not only time smell the roses – it is also time to wake up and take your sleep seriously.