



CONNECTIONS

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GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP?

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If you want to be productive at the office and energized at home, you need to spend enough time sleeping.

Unfortunately, the fast-lane lifestyle that is in vogue these days can make getting enough sleep a real challenge. Stanley Coren, author of *Sleep Thieves: An Eye-opening Exploration Into the Science and Mysteries of Sleep*, says that people now sleep about 1.5 hours less per night than in 1913 when electric light bulbs were invented. That's 500 hours per person per year.

While we do not fully understand sleep, we do know that its absence causes death. Rats, when deprived of all sleep, die. As near as researchers can tell, their immune system shut down and they are consumed by normally harmless microbes.

At the very least, typical results of chronic sleep deprivation include an increase in irritability and a deterioration of the ability to make good decisions about complex information. Coren believes that a chronic shortage of sleep produces serious problems in people, who have evolved to sleep 9 to

10 hours per night. In his book, Coren provides numerous hair-raising accounts of accidents and near-misses from pilots, power plant operators, truck drivers and physicians.

Coren researched traffic accidents in Canada and found that when daylight savings time gives everyone an extra hour of sleep in the fall, accidents drop 7% the next day. There is a corresponding rise in accidents in the spring. On a larger scale, Coren says that the Three Mile Island and Chernobyl accidents, the Space Shuttle Challenger disaster, and Exxon Valdez wreck all have one factor in common: bad decisions were made by people with heavy sleep debt. In the case of the Challenger, he shows that all of the history to predict the O-ring failure was presented in a meeting before the launch. But managers were so sleep-deprived from NASA's ambitious schedule that they could not recognize it.



HAPPY
VALENTINE'S DAY

CONNECTIONS

To improve the quality of your sleep:

- Cut down on coffee and other stimulants during the day, and skip the alcohol before bed.
- Stick to a regular schedule for going to bed and waking up, even on weekends.
- Get some light exercise in the late afternoon or early evening.
- Spend some quiet time before going to bed.
- Don't do stressful activities (like working on the report your boss has been pestering you about) in the bedroom.

Take a nap - it's good for you!

About half the people in the world take a nap each day - the afternoon siesta is part of life in most tropical and subtropical regions.

If you want to try renewing your energy and reducing everyday stress by taking a nap, there is sound evidence that the ideal nap time is indeed mid-afternoon, between 2:00 and 3:00 p.m.

Afternoons are optimal because napping early or late in the day can interfere with your night-time sleep. It's all right to use a nap for catching up on lost sleep, but naps shouldn't become a substitute for sleep.

Afternoon naps also give you just enough deep sleep to feel refreshed. Morning naps

are mainly light sleep, while evening naps put you into an overly sound deep sleep; either way, you end up feeling fatigued or groggy after the nap rather than invigorated. Keep your nap under an hour - more than that won't increase the benefits.

Remember: adequate sleep is crucial to good health! Here are a few helpful hints:

- Keep your room cool (promotes drowsiness), dark, and block noises.
- Beautify your bedroom. Make it a place of peace and serenity.
- Allow for thorough ventilation in the room to avoid breathing stale air.
- Ensure that your bed is comfortable.
- Pay attention to your bedclothes to ensure adequate warmth.
- Eat on schedule. Watch the foods you consume close to bedtime. Meats, fast foods, desserts, coffee and alcohol can be difficult to digest. If your stomach is continually working, you will not sleep soundly.
- Exercise and stretching can promote a deeper sleep, if done on a regular basis and not too close to bedtime, by releasing muscle tension.

Be Smart With Sleep!


