THE HEALING EFFECTS OF SLEEP AND DREAMS

Introduction

Sleep dispenses a multitude of health benefits every twenty-four hours. However many of us do not reap these benefits, and even pride ourselves on being able to get by on little sleep. Yet, research clearly shows that getting less than seven or eight hour of sleep nightly is considered sleep deprivation and can have serious effects on your health.

The Architecture of Sleep

![Figure 8: The Architecture of Sleep](image-url)

- Wake
- REM
- NREM Stage 1
- NREM Stage 2
- NREM Stages 3 and 4
  - (Slow wave sleep)

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Some Sleep Statistics

--Adults 45 years or older who get less than six hours of sleep a night are 200 percent more than their peers, getting seven to eight hours of sleep, to have a heart attack or stroke.

--This coming week, more than 2 million people in the US will fall asleep while driving their cars.

--1.2 million accidents are caused by sleepiness each year in the US.

--Vehicle accidents caused by drowsy driving exceed those caused by alcohol and drugs combined.

--In every major psychiatric condition, lack of sleep is a factor.

--Resident physicians in a hospital working a thirty-hour straight shift will commit 36 percent more serious medical errors compared to those working sixteen hours or less.

--Two-thirds of adults throughout all developed nations fail to obtain the recommended eight hours of nightly sleep.

--Sleeping less that seven or eight hours a night demolishes your immune system and more than double your risk of cancer.

No Catching Up On Lost Sleep

We can never “sleep back” that which we have previously lost in the way of sleep. You can’t makeup on the weekend what you lost during the week.
A Rare Few of Sleepless Elite

There is a rare collection of individuals who appear to be able to survive on just four or five hours of sleep, and show minimal impairment.

Morning People and Night People

About 40 percent of the population are morning people.

About 30 percent are night people.

The remaining 30 percent falls somewhere in between.

The Dream State

Twenty to twenty-five percent of a good nights sleep is spent in dreaming. Dreams come from deep within the brain, not from the gods or other outside forces.

Thirty-five to fifty-five percent of our dreams are related to the previous days emotional concerns and cares, and serve two core benefits: They nurse our emotional and mental health—a type of overnight therapy. Second, they contribute to problem solving and creative expression.

The Non-dream State

Three-fourths of a good nights sleep is spent in non-dream sleep. Non-dream sleep is a powerful memory aid—both before and after learning something.
It is involved in making new memories and cementing those memories in the brain in order not to forget them.

**Consequences of Poor Sleep**

When we fail to get a good nights sleep the non-dream sleep period’s shut down the memory in-box, and new information is simply bounced.

When one is repeatedly deprived of dream sleep, he develops symptoms of mental illness associated with hallucinations and paranoid thinking.

**Sleep and Seniors**

A sound night of sleep is a challenge for seniors.

Myth: Older adults need less sleep than younger people.

Three Major Changes with Age:
--There is reduced quality and quantity of nightly sleep.
--There is more fragmented sleep
--There is a shift in the timing of sleep leading to earlier and earlier bedtimes.

**An Important Note:**

*Any individual, no matter what age, exhibits ailment, mental health instability, reduced alertness, and impaired memory if their sleep is chronically disrupted.*
Family Member’s Thoughts

Family members frequently fail to distinguish between too little nightly sleep and dementia since sleep deprivation is common with the lack of sleep. In the senior years, poor memory and poor sleep are significantly interrelated.

Sleep Aids

In any one-month almost 10 million people in America will take some kind of sleeping pill, and the majority of them are seniors.

The Problem with Sleep Pills: They do not provide us with natural sleep. They will put you to sleep, but not into healthy natural sleep.

Sleeping pills target the same system in the brain that alcohol does—the receptors that stop your brain cells from firing. Sleeping pills are sedatives and effectively knock out the higher regions of the brain’s cortex.

As previously mentioned, natural sleep helps cement connections within the brain and strengthens connections between the synapses that make up a memory circuit.

What About A Nightcap?

It does not promote healthy, natural sleep. Rather if fragments sleep, littering the night with brief awakenings.
What About Melatonin?

Melatonin is not a powerful sleeping aid in and of itself. But there is a significant sleep placebo effect of melatonin. And the placebo effect is the most reliable effect in all of pharmacology. Older adults may find it helpful to consult their physician about taking melatonin in the evening. Unlike younger adults or middle-aged adults, where melatonin has not proved effectuations, prescription melatonin has bee shown to help the elderly, reducing the time it takes to fall asleep and improve sleep quality and morning alertness.

The Most Effective Sleep Aid
Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) at present is the most effective method for improving one’s sleep, especially if you are suffering from insomnia.

What Is CBT?

It is a several week therapy program using a set of techniques intended to break bad sleeping habits and address anxieties that have been inhibiting sound sleep.

The American College of Physician’s 2016 Statement

*BCT must be used as the first-line treatment for all individuals with chronic insomnia, not sleeping pills.*

If you have questions or comments about this presentation or would like to book a speaking engagement for this presentation, you may contact me at Milofbenningfield@gmail.com or by phone at 972-668-3902.
Recommended Readings and Resources


Go to The National Sleep Foundation website for resources on sleep centers near you: https://sleep foundation.org

Appendix

*Twelve Tips for Healthy Sleep*

1. Stick to a sleep schedule. Go to bed and wake up at the same time each day. As creatures of habit, people have a hard time adjusting to changes in sleep patterns. Sleeping later on weekends won’t fully make up for a lack of sleep during the week and will make it harder to wake up early on Monday morning. Set an alarm for bedtime. Often we set an alarm for when it’s time to wake up but fail to do so for when it’s time to go to sleep. If there is only one piece of advice you remember and take from these twelve tips, this should be it.

2. Exercise is great, but not too late in the day. Try to exercise at least thirty minutes on most days but not later than two to three hours before your bedtime.

3. Avoid caffeine and nicotine. Coffee, colas, certain teas, and chocolate contain the stimulant caffeine, and its effects can take as long as eight hours to wear off fully. Therefore, a cup of coffee in the late afternoon can make it hard for you to fall asleep at night. Nicotine is also a stimulant, often causing smokers to sleep only very lightly. In addition, smokers often wake up too early in the morning because of nicotine withdrawal.

4. Avoid alcoholic drinks before bed. Having a nightcap or alcoholic beverage before sleep may help you relax, but heavy use robs you of REM sleep, keeping you in the lighter stages of sleep. Heavy alcohol ingestion also may contribute to impairment in breathing at night. You also tend to wake up in the middle of the night when the effects of the alcohol have worn off.

5. Avoid large meals and beverages late at night. A light snack is okay, but a large meal can cause indigestion, which interferes with sleep.

Drinking too many fluids at night can cause frequent awakenings to urinate.

6. If possible, avoid medicines that delay or disrupt your sleep. Some commonly prescribed heart, blood pressure, or asthma medications, as well as some over-the-counter and herbal remedies for coughs, colds, or allergies, can disrupt sleep patterns. If you have trouble sleeping, talk to your health care provider or pharmacist to see whether any drugs you're taking might be contributing to your insomnia and ask whether they can be taken at other times during the day or early in the evening.

7. Don't take naps after 3 p.m. Naps can help make up for lost sleep, but late afternoon naps can make it harder to fall asleep at night.

8. Relax before bed. Don't overschedule your day so that no time is left for unwinding. A relaxing activity, such as reading or listening to music, should be part of your bedtime ritual.

9. Take a hot bath before bed. The drop in body temperature after getting out of the bath may help you feel sleepy, and the bath can help you relax and slow down so you're more ready to sleep.

10. Dark bedroom, cool bedroom, gadget-free bedroom. Get rid of anything in your bedroom that might distract you from sleep, such as noises, bright lights, an uncomfortable bed, or warm temperatures. You sleep better if the temperature in the room is kept on the cool side. A TV, cell phone, or computer in the bedroom can be a distraction and deprive you of needed sleep. Having a comfortable mattress and pillow can help promote a good night's sleep. Individuals who have insomnia often watch the clock. Turn the clock's face out of view so you don't worry about the time while trying to fall asleep.

11. Have the right sunlight exposure. Daylight is key to regulating daily sleep patterns. Try to get outside in natural sunlight for at least thirty minutes each day. If possible, wake up with the sun or use very bright lights in the morning. Sleep experts recommend that, if you have problems falling asleep, you should get an hour of exposure to morning sunlight and turn down the lights before bedtime.

12. Don't lie in bed awake. If you find yourself still awake after staying in bed for more than twenty minutes or if you are starting to feel anxious or worried, get up and do some relaxing activity until you feel sleepy. The anxiety of not being able to sleep can make it harder to fall asleep.