

Sleep—The Key to a Fresh Perspective

Sleep is a great restorer of our sense of physical well-being and our psychological balance. It improves our efficiency and puts our problems in fresh perspective. Though we all know that sleep is kind, there's a great deal we do not know about the process of falling asleep and the problems of those who don't get enough sleep.

A great many changes take place in your body during sleep, and most of them can be measured. Your pulse slows down and your blood pressure is lowered. Your

body temperature and basal metabolism drop. Your muscles relax and your kidneys are less active. For reasons unknown, sweat glands become more active and the flow of blood to your brain increases.

Not everyone requires the same amount of sleep. The eight hours a night which is frequently recommended is a broad average, and no one should feel committed to it, because there is considerable difference among individuals. Some people feel groggy if they have less than ten hours

of sleep and others feel bright and chipper with only four. There are differences, not only among individuals, also among age groups. Children require sleep and elderly persons seem to need less — perhaps because the latter are less active and nap frequently during the day.

Problems of getting to sleep represent a common complaint of millions of persons in this country — many of whom worry about it more than they need to. In the first place, few people actually stay awake all night, although

many believe that they do. And in the second place, the loss of a night's sleep is not as serious a happening as many feel it is. It is far better to forego a night's sleep than to develop a state of panic about your insomnia or to reach habitually for a sleeping pill for fear you can't go to sleep without it.

Insomnia, though rarely serious, can nevertheless be a source of discomfort and a nuisance, and in many cases it can be relieved by following simple, sensible practices. The important thing to keep

in mind is that any discomfort or tension, physical or emotional, can interfere with your sleep. For instance, when you are exhausted and are counting desperately on a good night's sleep to put you back on your feet, the very intensity of your fatigue may keep you awake. Often this can be counteracted if you take a short nap late in the afternoon or early in the evening.

Anything that over-stimulates you mentally or emotionally will delay your falling to sleep. Avoid reading

a complicated material or studying hard during the late hours of the evening; try to steer clear of thinking about or discussing problems which concern you. Even pleasant stimulation, such as a gay evening involving a lot of conversation with many people, can interfere with sleep.

Coffee, tea, alcohol, and cigarettes all have the effect of keeping you awake. So does hunger. That's why a glass of warm milk serves effectively to ease some people into sleep. Others find they are helped by a bedtime snack of

a piece of hard candy, which helps the body maintain a constant sugar level. Over-eating at dinner time, on the other hand, may promote the discomfort of indigestion, which discourages sleep.

Sometimes simple and easily remedied physical discomforts are the basis for insomnia. Be sure your room is at a comfortable temperature, that your night clothing is neither too tight nor too loose, and that your bedsheets are smooth.

Finally, don't watch the clock as the night hours pass.

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