



Image Source: Robert S. Rosenberg

# Stress Less, Sleep Better

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# Learning Objectives

- Review the connection between stress and poor sleep and their impact on physical and emotional health
- Learn about the role of thinking strategies and relaxation techniques to help you manage stress and quiet your mind to get to sleep
- Discover the foundations of stress management and sleep success

# Health Consequences of Stress & Poor Sleep

- Diabetes
- Hypertension
- Cardiovascular disease
- Stroke
- Cancer
- Alzheimer's disease
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Obesity
- Accidents
- Reduced memory capacity
- Cognitive impairment

# Stress is...

- The body's natural response to changes and challenges
- We need it for SURVIVAL
- An arousal state in which the body reacts with **fight-or-flight**
- This fight-or-flight state triggers an emergency response which alters the body's energy balance
- This response is hardwired into all of us!

# The Good, The Bad and The Ugly

- **Good Stress** (Eustress): helps us set and achieve goals as well as perform at a higher level
- **Bad Stress** (Situational): brings feelings of tension, anxiety, anger, frustration and often causes withdrawal or lashing out
- **Ugly Stress** (Distress): chronic, pervasive, subtle and brings lack of energy, chronic depression, health problems and low self-esteem. It is this type of stress that comprises every area of health including sleep

# The Stress/Sleep Cycle

- It is normal to have intermittent sleep disturbances especially during times of stress and change
- High levels of stress can contribute to trouble sleeping
- Poor-quality or insufficient sleep can hamper our ability to cope with stress



# What is Sleep Good For?

**ABSOLUTELY EVERYTHING!**

- Our immune system function is tied to the amount and quality of our sleep
- Every system and organ of the body is in some way affected by sleep
- It is one of the “3 Pillars of Good Health” where we can exert some control

# Sleep 101

## HOW MUCH SLEEP DO WE NEED?

- ENOUGH! Average adult should sleep anywhere from 6 - 9 hours (varies by individual)
- How much sleep you “produce” depends on how active you are
- Our sleep needs change overtime

## HOW LONG SHOULD IT TAKE TO FALL ASLEEP?

- It is normal to take about 10-30 minutes to fall asleep
- Taking less than 10 minutes to fall asleep may indicate a sleep disorder

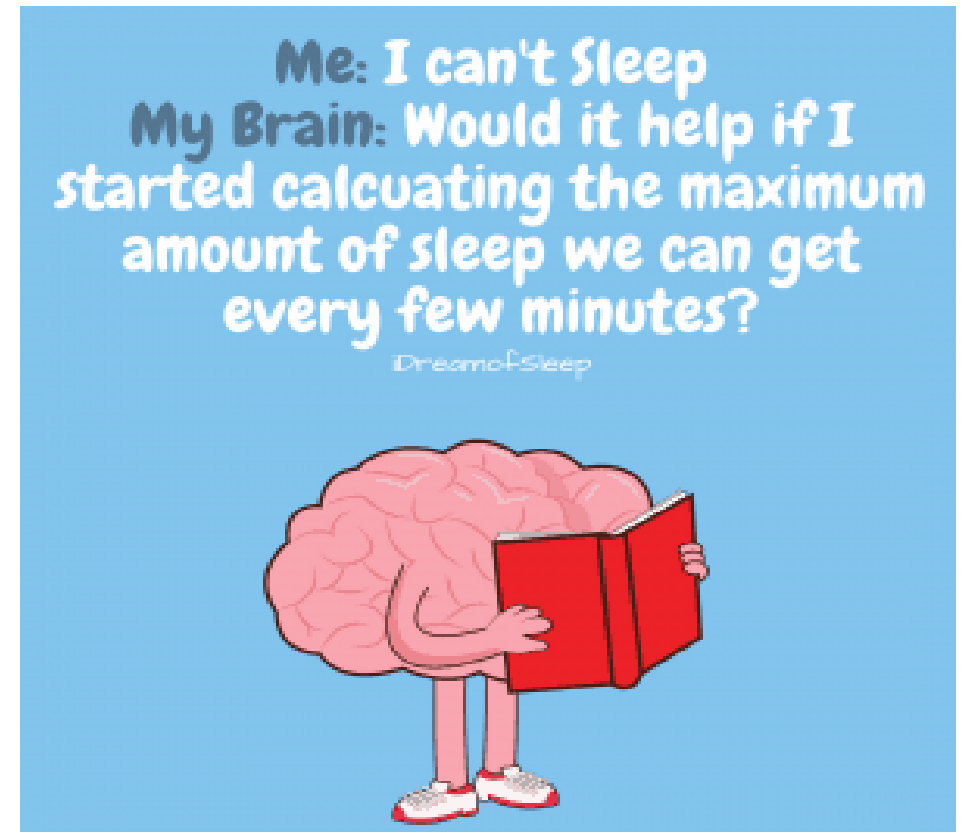


# What gets in the way of sleep?

- Stress (can be positive or negative)
- “Bed-buddies” that disrupt sleep (e.g. partner who snores, pets)
- Use of substances that block sleep including alcohol, cannabis, smoking, vaping, caffeinated beverages and chocolate
- Low sleep drive – caused by reduced activity, napping, spending too much time in bed (going to bed early, sleeping in)

# Thinking & Sleep – Cognitive Arousal

- Steady stream of thoughts that we can't "shut off" and prevent us from sleeping ("Tired But Wired")
- Constantly thinking about our sleep and the consequences of poor sleep as well as thoughts that we have to compensate for lost sleep



# Thinking & Sleep – Conditioned Arousal

- *“I can fall asleep on the couch no problem, but I’m wide awake as soon as I go to bed”*
- This is called “the switch story” where we pair our bedroom/bedtime with lack of sleep
- This happens through no fault of our own

# Breaking the Stress/Sleep Cycle

- Sleep Hygiene
- Relaxation Techniques
- Practical Strategies for Quieting the Mind
- Reducing Sleep Effort

# Sleep Hygiene

- Eliminate all sources of light (at least one hour before bed)
- Reduce noise (consider “sleep vacation” with disruptive bed-buddy)
- Keep the bedroom cool, dark, and quiet, and avoid working, eating, and watching TV in the bedroom
- Reduce caffeine, alcohol, smoking, vaping in the evening and avoid large meals close to bedtime

# Sleep Hygiene

- Engage in physical activity/exercise as tolerated during the day
- Maintain a consistent sleep schedule (consistent wake time is key!)
- When possible, try to get some exposure to sunlight/daylight to help regulate your internal sleep/wake clock
- Develop a bedtime self-care routine - think about how we get children to sleep which includes setting time to “wind down”

# Benefits of Relaxation Techniques

- Reduces the stress hormone
- Lowers heart rate and blood pressure
- Deepens our breathing
- Reduce muscle tension, pain and inflammation
- Stabilize blood sugar levels
- Improves memory, concentration, energy, mood and **SLEEP**



# Types of Relaxation Techniques

- Diaphragmatic (“belly”) Breathing
- Progression Muscle Relaxation
- Visualization/Guided Imagery
- Mindfulness meditation (formal and informal exercises)
- APPS – Calm, Headspace, Buddhify, Insight Timer

**The most effective relaxation technique is the one you use consistently**



# Practical Strategies for Quieting the Mind

- **Distraction Techniques**

- Engage in neutral thoughts such as planning an event in your mind, imagining yourself performing a task in detail (such as playing a round of golf, baking something from scratch)

- **Constructive Worry**

- Helps manage the tendency to worry at bedtime anxiety at bedtime
- Some find it helpful to have a notepad at their bedside to write down what comes up in their mind at night

# Strategies to Reduce “Sleep Effort”

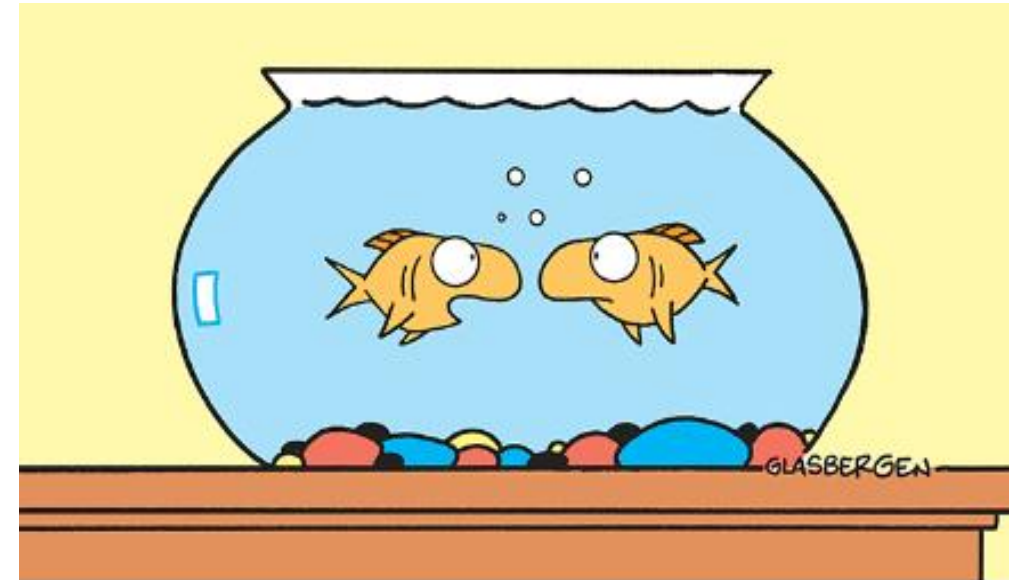
- Do not go to bed unless you feel sleepy
- Do not stay in bed when it’s obvious that you won’t be able to get to sleep
- Refrain from looking at the time if you wake up during the night
- Do not linger in bed after your alarm goes off (get out of bed once awake)
- Do not go to bed when you’re tired during the day. Take a “power nap” to promote alertness if driving or doing other activities where drowsiness is a hazard

# The Good, The Bad and The Ugly: What are you willing to work on?

- Identify the sources of the good, bad and the ugly stress in your life
- Consider your own thoughts, feelings and behaviours that contribute to your everyday stress levels (and how these either create or maintain stress in our lives)
- Use a “stress journal” to explore your triggers, how you deal with them and areas for change

# Examine How You Cope

- Think about how you currently respond to stress
- We often cope in ways that often makes stress worse
- These coping strategies may temporarily reduce stress, but cause more damage in the long run



**“You’ve been awfully tense lately. They say petting a cat is a great way to relieve stress!”**

# Thinking & Stress

- Our thoughts have a big influence on our experience of stress (and our emotional health)
- We find ourselves coping with negative thoughts especially during times of stress
- What we tell ourselves about a situation affects how we feel, what we do and the extent to which the stress impacts us
- Pay attention to negative self-talk and find ways to develop balanced thoughts about your situation

# Key Messages – Stress Less

- The key to stress management is the willingness to change how we react, respond and cope
- There is no “one size fits all” method to manage stress - different tools will work for different situations
- Relaxation techniques are as effective as medication for stress relief. Choose one that works for you!
- Speak with your doctor if you notice an intensity of low mood (more than just a “down day” once in a while)

# Key Messages – Sleep Well

- Falling asleep is like falling in love - you can't force it!
- “Act like a kid” - approach sleep strategies the way we ensure sleep success for children (get outside, eat well, develop a “feel-good” sleep routine in evening)
- Achieving great sleep can take time - start with small changes that can have a big impact (i.e. target sleep-blocking behaviours, move your body, engage in relaxation, change your thoughts about your sleep)