Sleep Smarter: How Rest Powers Performance



In today's society, sleep is often looked over and not considered an important aspect of health. Between working long hours, busy schedules, extracurricular activities, and maintaining a home, it is easy to put quality sleep on the back burner. However, there are so many benefits to getting regular quality sleep. Quality sleep can affect both mental health and physical health.

Mental Health Benefits of Sufficient Sleep

One aspect of mental health is that sleep affects your overall mood. Getting adequate sleep can help maintain a more positive mood and better emotional balance. People who get regular quality sleep tend to be able to handle stressors throughout their day better than those who do not get adequate sleep. Quality sleep also contributes to improved focus and concentration. Poor sleep can make it very difficult to focus on work, school, and family, and also make it more challenging to solve problems throughout the day. Being able to focus and concentrate better leads to increased productivity, which of course can lead to less stress. When stressed, improved sleep can help the body regulate the stress response.

How Sleep Affects Your Physical Health

It is widely known that getting quality sleep has a huge effect on your health. One way quality sleep affects your health is by strengthening your immune system. Do you ever notice that you get sick more when you are not getting enough sleep? People who tend to get adequate sleep, also tend to get sick less, or when they do get sick, they recover faster. Getting adequate sleep can also help maintain a healthy weight. While getting quality sleep is not the only thing to contribute to a health weight, it is one contributing factor. Poor sleep can affect hormones that control hunger and fullness, so when those hormones are disrupted, it can lead to weight gain. Lastly, regular quality sleep is associated with lowered risks of chronic diseases, such as Type 2 Diabetes and Cardiovascular Disease.

Tips for Getting Sufficient Sleep

- Limit screen time before bed. Try disconnecting from your phone, ipad, tablet, or laptop for at least one hour leading up to your bedtime. The blue light from screens can interfere with your body's natural sleep signals. Especially limiting social media and the news prior to bed can also be beneficial because stories from those outlets can keep your mind up and alert, instead of being in a relaxed state.
- Stick to a consistent schedule. Try to go to sleep and wake up around the same times each day, even on the weekends. Your body needs consistency, as consistency can help regulate your body's internal clock.
- Create a relaxing bedtime routine and environment. In addition to limiting your social media intake and news intake prior to bed, creating a relaxing environment in other ways can also be helpful. Some of these ways may include: keeping your bedroom dark and cool, having soft, instrumental music playing, and ensuring you have a comfortable bed and bedding. Before bed, maybe try completing relaxing activities such as stretching, reading, journaling, or meditation.
- Be mindful of your caffeine intake throughout the day. If you drink caffeine, try to limit your intake to one cup a day, and only drink it in the morning. Caffeine can stay in your system for several hours and can make it harder to fall asleep.
- Stay physically active. Regular physical activity can support better sleep by using energy during the day, which can lead to relaxation and less time to fall asleep at night. You don't need hours each day to workout, even a quick 15-20 minute workout can support better sleep.

For more information, tools, resources, or app information, call your Life Advisor Employee Assistance Program!

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