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Sleep Better by Breaking Bad Habits

Waiting until you feel sleepy working at the computer late at night before going to bed is not a dreamy idea. Ditto, taking a laptop to bed and falling asleep. These behaviors (and others like them) ruin sleep quality. Repeated research has warned that lack of sleep increases your risk of health problems such as cancer, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and even obesity. Recommendations from the National Sleep Foundation for better sleep include the following: 1) participating in a ritual of preparing for sleep each night before climbing into bed, and 2) going to bed at the same time each night, even on weekends or days off. Also, have a routine in the morning when you wake up. Start tonight, and see if these suggestions don’t improve your sleep quality. See your doctor if sleep issues persist.

Stay in Emotional Control at Work

Control your emotions—don’t let them control you. It sounds simple, but it can be difficult. Still, it is one of the most important skills you can learn for managing workplace stress. Three feeling states dominate negativity at work: anger, disappointment, and frustration. When you experience any of these, be capable of practicing the art of detachment. Don’t lose patience, mope at your desk, give people the silent treatment, or withhold information—these are unhealthy coping tactics. Detachment may include taking a short hallway walk; counting to ten; changing your body posture to one that is erect and sure, with your chin up; doing slow, deep-breathing exercises; or taking a quick jog, if your work situation permits. Reinforce this overall new coping strategy by checking your progress after 30 days. Ask a friend if they’ve noticed your improved mood.

Vital Nutrients: Are You Missing Any?

A recent study found Americans are lacking several nutrients vital to maintaining good health and helping prevent serious illness. Are you at risk? Women in particular are lacking calcium for good bone health. You can get it from dark, leafy vegetables; dairy products; and finfish. Fiber is also missing from diets. Get it from vegetables, fruits, legumes, and nuts. Fiber promotes good heart health and cuts your chances of developing diabetes. Magnesium helps you maintain healthy muscle and nerve function, and it helps in bone development. Get yours from bran, nuts, seeds, and fish like halibut. Make sure you get plenty of potassium to help keep blood pressure in check. Good sources include bananas and yogurt. Source: www.usda.gov.

Manage Stress to Protect Your Memory

Many factors may contribute to memory loss as we age, but researchers continue to make news by understanding the harm and impact of cortisol, a stress hormone. It’s critical to our “fight or flight” survival but damaging to the brain, with chronic exposure resulting from relentless and acute stress. The following interventions reduce cortisol: reducing caffeine; drinking water to stay hydrated; reducing processed foods, white bread, candy; cakes, and non-whole-wheat pasta; drinking black tea; and eating more fish. Even meditation has been shown to reduce cortisol levels.
Overcoming the Emotional Impact of Physical Illness

When you’re diagnosed with a serious medical condition, both emotional effects and physical symptoms will contribute to your distress, and the emotional part can be the more difficult. It’s normal to have negative feelings about your diagnosis, including anger, fear, depression, and guilt, but working through these feelings will help you better manage your condition and possibly improve your prognosis. Indeed, studies have shown that managing difficult feelings and emotions can develop hope, something critical in overcoming a serious condition. Talk about your anger with the people you love. Anger can mask other feelings, like fear, and talking with patient, loving listeners will help you find solutions to what’s troubling you the most. Overcome fear by learning all you can about your condition, the treatment options, and ways to cope with it. And don’t try to soldier through depression. Ask your doctor about medication, or see a professional counselor for support. Don’t overlook the idea of a support group. Hundreds of support groups exist for almost every medical condition, and even online forums can provide you with a surprising level of support if you can’t locate a specific type of group nearby. The right one can be the most powerful coping strategy of all.

In Search of Enthusiastic Employees

If there is one thing employers look for, it’s enthusiastic employees. Some will hire employees with less experience just to get more enthusiasm. Enthusiasm is infectious in the same way a bad attitude can affect others, and it inspires a host of other positives, like engagement, cooperation, innovation, high productivity, and fun at work. Demonstrate enthusiasm by doing what you are asked, doing it without delay, and doing it the way your boss wants it done. Pitch in to do things others avoid. When your supervisor asks who would like to volunteer to straighten the staff kitchen, raise your hand. See problems as “opportunities” first, not roadblocks designed to make life unhappy. Think a little bit like an entrepreneur when problems arise in order to discover solutions faster. And demonstrate loyalty. Avoid gossip about your supervisor (or others), and steer conversations away from gossip. Adopt these tips and your career may skyrocket along with your love of the job.

Volunteering as a Family

Teach your kids the value of helping others this summer by participating in family volunteer opportunities. Volunteering as a family is a powerful way to increase self-confidence and self-esteem in children and teens while passing on the value of community giving. Working together as a family also brings you closer together. You can find community projects for your family in a variety of places, like churches, your favorite charity, or hospitals. Consider a one-time event before you commit to an ongoing project. Look for projects that match your family’s interest level and skill. Pet lovers can volunteer at the local animal shelter. If you are handy with tools, try giving an organization like Habitat for Humanity a call. Gardeners can help keep a park or roadway looking beautiful. See a list of reviewed volunteer websites that are family friendly, and available to the public by Tufts University. You’ll find them at www.cfw.tufts.edu. Use the keyword “volunteering” to pull up a ton of opportunities and ideas.

APS Healthcare’s Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

The EAP program through APS Healthcare assists organizations and their workforce in managing the personal challenges that impact employee well-being, performance and effectiveness. APS’ life management consultants employ a comprehensive approach that identifies issues impacting the employee and assists them in developing meaningful solutions.

Please call the phone number below for more information about your Employee Assistance Program and the services available to you.

1-866-598-3978

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