

The background of the cover features a woman with dark hair sleeping peacefully on her side, wearing a light green shirt. Overlaid on this is a glowing blue brain with intricate neural pathways and several glowing blue circles and lines, suggesting a focus on neuroscience or cognitive health. The overall color palette is dark blue with bright blue and yellow highlights.

# IS LACK OF SLEEP HARMING YOUR HEALTH?

**3 SURPRISING TRUTHS REVEALED**

**AND WHAT TO DO NEXT**

**MARK WILLIAMS**

# **Is Lack of Sleep Harming Your Health? 3 Surprising Truths Revealed (and What to do Next)**

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## INTRODUCTION

*“Man is a genius when he is dreaming.” — Akira Kurosawa*

Teri, a single mother of four and an entrepreneur, endured **two months** of frequent sleeplessness to put up her catering business.

“The bills were piling up, so I had to hustle,” she shared.

She often did 14 to 16-hour workdays during that period, coordinating with colleagues and clients.

Towards the end, Teri worked almost **20 hours a day** to make it to the finish line.

“Between dealing with customers, suppliers, my social media team and the IT folks setting up my website, sleeping wasn’t much of an option for me,” she recalls with a chuckle.

Teri knew she was at her breaking point when the lines between reality and dreaming started to blur:

“About a week before our big launch, we were in a last-minute meeting with my team to make sure nothing went wrong. That’s when my Powerpoint presentation started looking...*weird*. The text seemed to float off the screen, and the income projection graphs started to **dance** in front of me.”

It came as a shock to Teri because she didn't feel tired at all towards the end. It was only when she started **seeing things** that she finally realized what she was doing to herself.

But she wasn’t ready for what happened next.

Teri said, “A couple of days before we went live, I decided to go home and get some rest. My marketing guy suggested I get a cab after seeing how brain-dead I looked. But I insisted I could drive myself.”

That was a **big mistake**. She dozed off at the wheel for a few seconds and drifted into the opposite lane.

“When I came to, my face was buried in an airbag and shards of glass were in my hair and face,” she said, with tears welling up in her eyes.

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Fortunately, Teri had only clipped the other vehicle, sending her crashing into a nearby tree.

“The police said that if I hit that car at a slightly different angle, it would have ended badly for both of us.”

Teri was extremely lucky to walk away with only a few bruises and scratches. The other driver was even luckier and just wrecked her bumper.

“I ended up postponing the launch for the following week so I could recover. But it all worked out in the end,” Teri said.

But after the dust settled and the chaos died down, she promised herself she’d **never** put herself – or her children – through that ordeal again.

Teri shared, “Stretching my waking hours like that *almost* cost me my life. I realized that no amount of time or money would be worth leaving my children without a mother.”

## The Threat of Sleep Deprivation

Like Teri, millions of other people try to get through the day with little to no sleep – and the consequences are worse than they think.

According to the American Academy of Sleep Medicine and Sleep Research Society, “adults need 7 or more hours of sleep per night for the best health and wellbeing.”

Also, a study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that adults who slept less than 7 hours of sleep daily had a higher chance of being **overweight and sedentary**.

What’s worse, the CDC also discovered that the sleep-deprived subjects were more likely to develop the following chronic health conditions:

- Coronary heart disease
- Stroke Asthma
- COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)
- Cancer
- Arthritis

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- Depression
- Chronic kidney disease
- Diabetes

These are alarming findings, and the CDC calls it nothing less than a **“public health epidemic.”**

After all, they found that the number of people in the U.S. suffering from a sleep disorder is around **70 million**.

Here’s another interesting fact: a lack of sleep causes the brain to *cannibalize itself*.

Researchers from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Geisel School of Medicine, and Marche Polytechnic University in Italy observed the effects of sleep deprivation in mice.

They found that brain cells called glial cells started to go haywire after a few days of no sleep.

Typically, these cells perform maintenance duties like getting rid of old cells and rewiring the connections inside the brain for better performance.

However, after the mice pulled one too many all-nighters, the same glial cells worked overtime and **attacked healthy cells and synapses**.

This might be why poor sleeping habits increase the risk of neurodegenerative diseases like Alzheimer’s and dementia.

## **Sleeplessness: NOT a Badge of Honor**

A lot of us brag about being able to go without a lick of shut-eye because we’re so busy getting stuff done.

While being busy and productive isn’t bad in itself, it’s wise to lose the cocky attitude.

Nature is a thing of wonder, and you’ve been programmed with those sleep signals for a **reason**.

Whether it’s pain, hunger or exhaustion, your body is trying to tell you what it needs to *stay alive*.

When you ignore these signals for too long, you’ll push your body past its limits– this can lead to life-threatening consequences.

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I'm not just talking about the long-term effects of not sleeping, either.

In a LOT of cases, a lack of sleep can literally **kill you on the spot**.

Remember what happened to poor Teri?

Well, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration in the U.S. says that every year, **40,000** people are injured while **1,550 people die** on average from sleep-related driving accidents.

Car crashes aside, people are *dropping dead* from sheer exhaustion in other parts of the world.

In Indonesia, a 24-year-old woman died after working **30 hours straight**.

Another woman in Japan died from heart failure after working **159 hours of overtime** in a month.

A 32-year-old man spent his last moments slumped at a chair in an Internet café in Taiwan.

Authorities said he died from cardiac arrest, which was likely caused by his **three-day online gaming marathon**.

And in South Korea, a 28-year-old man suffered the same fate after **playing for 50 hours** at a gaming café.

So yeah, not sleeping enough is bad for you.

Sure, these are extreme cases, but as you'll soon learn, the effects of daily deprivation add up.

I don't care how tough you are – you can't beat biology. Do you really want to make yourself unhealthier one day at a time?

If you look at the bigger scheme of things, there's nothing noble or tough about burning the midnight oil...

...and being younger **won't shield you** from poor sleeping habits, either.

Remember, NONE of those people I mentioned were past their forties, so this isn't something that happens to "old people."

Some people say, "Make hay while the sun is shining."

*But at what cost?*

Everyone needs their sleep - and a lack thereof is **DEADLY** for **ALL** of us.

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## Are You Listening Now?

Now, there are **three hidden truths** about losing sleep that you need to be aware of.

These are the most significant risks to your health. If you're interested in adding more years to your life, you need to know what you're up against.

But I don't want to paint an entirely grim picture for you here. There is a light of hope at the end of this sleep-deprived tunnel.

So, you're also going to find out how to **take your sleep back** so you don't have to be another statistic.

Let's get into the first one...

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## Truth #1: Is Lack of Sleep Making You Fat?

*“You are the biggest enemy of your own sleep.” — Pawan Mishra*

Before we get into the link between obesity and poor sleeping habits, let's take a step back.

To better appreciate the big picture, I'd like to take you on a little tour of what goes on inside the human body during sleep deprivation.

First of all, your body will be flooded with stress hormones like **cortisol**. This is a natural response during a stressful situation such as (surprise, surprise) not getting enough rest.

This creates a vicious feedback loop because those stress hormones will make it harder for you to sleep.

So when you're stressed out from a lack of sleep, it keeps those hormones pumping.

Lather, rinse, repeat.

(By the way, too much cortisol also increases your chances of cardiovascular disease, inflammation and even diabetes.)

What sucks even more is that you'll be taking micro-naps throughout the day.

It's like turning yourself off and back on again. Like Teri, this could have disastrous consequences at the **wrong time**.

And this usually happens several times in a row, several minutes apart.

What's more, you'll have the alertness and mental clarity of a zombie.

You're better off skipping that late-night cramming session for that test at school or presentation at work.

You'll have to give up some serious brain power for those extra hours, and that's not a pretty trade-off.

Your cognitive abilities will take a sharp dive if you haven't given your brain enough time to get itself together at night.

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That means your focus is shot and you **can't remember anything** worth a damn. You'll also have a hard time thinking and won't be able to hold a decent conversation.

You'll basically turn into a hollow, spaced-out version of yourself, drifting through the day like a specter.

Your body is there, but your mind **won't be**.

Plus, those stress hormones that are, well, *stressing you out*, are likely to raise your blood pressure like crazy too.

After all, your body is working at **full capacity** trying to keep you awake.

And the CDC also says that high blood pressure - the precursor to chronic hypertension - is the gateway to **heart and brain disease** later on.

To make matters worse, a lack of sleep also makes it harder for you to exercise. **Muscle mass and energy levels decline** when you're sleep deprived, so you'll have a harder time at the gym.

Not a good thing if you're trying to burn those calories.

Speaking of calories, you'll be a lot more inclined to consume *lots of it* – and not the nutrient-dense kind, either.

When you skimp on shut-eye, you'll have a powerful urge to snack on **unhealthy foods** stuffed with sugar and harmful fats.

When your body falls in this fragile state, so will your willpower. You'll cave in at the mere sight of a donut- or the slightest whiff of something deep-fried.

## So How Does Obesity Fit In?

Back in 2013, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) said that **more than half** of the North American population was overweight or obese.

And they project that by 2020, obesity rates will skyrocket to the point where *three-fourths of the U.S. will be obese*.

This isn't really surprising, considering how much processed food has penetrated our everyday lives.

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One stroll through your average supermarket and you'll see the aisles dominated by all manner of convenient snacks with zero nutrition.

All of them are designed to stimulate your senses and override your built-in signals to stop eating when you're full.

Plus, it's not easy to eat healthy when you live practically across your local McDonald's, Pizza Hut or Krispy Kreme.

But what does a lack of sleep have to do with any of this?

Well, we discussed earlier that millions and millions of people aren't getting enough rest at night...

...not to mention how this **same** problem contributes to poor eating habits.

And when you throw this "not sleeping" business into the mix, is it any wonder why it's only making the obesity situation WORSE?

But there's another layer to this whole mess which you need to know about.

Your **insulin production** gets screwed up when you're not well-rested. This is terrible news for your blood sugar levels.

As an energy-regulating hormone, one of insulin's biggest jobs is to remove sugar from your bloodstream. It will "tell" your cells to absorb the broken-down sugar and other nutrients.

You'll have some sugar left over in your blood, but insulin will send this off to your muscles and liver.

Doing all of this helps you store that energy where it belongs while bringing your blood sugar levels back to normal.

This is what happens when you eat healthily and get enough rest.

Ideally, your blood sugar should go up just enough for your insulin production to keep up with. Your metabolism will be able to store that energy into your cells and other organs.

BUT your insulin levels will get out of whack if you over-consume processed foods loaded with sugar and carbohydrates. And if you sleep poorly, it makes the problem worse.

This creates a serious mess in your bloodstream. In this state, you'll have a harder time keeping up with the spikes in your blood sugar.

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Your pancreas will have to work overtime to produce more and more insulin to remove that excess energy from your blood.

In a lot of cases, people get overrun by the sheer amount of sugar in their body.

If this goes on long enough, your cells and organs will have too much sugar stored in them.

And when they're stuffed, they'll start to "refuse" any more energy that insulin sends their way.

**This is bad for two reasons.**

One, your body will get used to this process, which means your metabolism will prefer to use sugar as an energy source. And when this happens, your body will ignore the fat you have stored up.

This brings us to the other problem.

Your liver, one of the organs filled with excess sugar, will start to convert this energy into saturated fats.

To make things even messier, these fats will cluster into triglycerides which go into your bloodstream.

This complicates things even further. Having **too much sugar and triglycerides** in your blood will mess with your brain.

To be specific, you'll have a harder time knowing when you've had enough to eat.

People produce a hormone called leptin while eating. Its primary function is to send a signal to your brain when there's enough energy stored.

This way, you'll feel full, want to move around, and start burning those calories.

But if your brain can't "hear" this message (because of the high sugar and triglyceride content in your bloodstream), you won't know when to **stop eating**.

## **Enter Insulin Resistance**

Things only get crazier from here.

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So now that your blood sugar and triglyceride levels have reached an all-time high (thanks to all that sugar-rich processed food), your stop signals can't get through.

That means you'll want to eat even **MORE** unhealthy food, which only keeps this vicious cycle going.

Meanwhile, your poor pancreas is *still at it*, pumping you full of insulin to contain this mess.

But like you found out earlier, your cells have already stopped "listening" to insulin's instructions to store more energy and nutrients.

By then, you'll start producing even **MORE** insulin, which is like pouring gasoline on an open flame.

This is called **insulin resistance**, a disorder where your body starts rejecting this hormone because of everything that's been going on.

At this point, you're now vulnerable to type 2 diabetes since your blood is chock-full of sugar AND insulin.

Too much insulin leads to other life-threatening conditions like cardiovascular disease, Alzheimer's and **obesity**.

## Consequences of Obesity

So let's rewind a little bit...

When you combine poor food choices with poor sleeping habits, this creates a massive problem for your overall health.

It throws off your metabolism and cripples your natural ability to manage your blood sugar levels. This, in turn, creates a surplus of sugar in your body, which is converted into harmful fats.

Then, your sugar and triglyceride-rich bloodstream will confuse your brain and upset your hormone balance.

You'll end up creating a cycle that pushes you to keep consuming calories which **turn into more fat**, making even harder for you to stop overeating.

Now you can see how this all adds up to the obesity problem.

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It's a trap that millions of people fall into, and their sleeping habits **don't help them** escape it.

You probably know that being obese is bad for you, but let's go through some of the worst effects.

Your heart will have a harder time pumping blood because of the excess fat present. This is high blood pressure, and your circulatory system will work twice as hard as it should be.

All that pressure puts an additional strain on your blood vessels, making them weaker and prone to damage.

On top of that, your arteries will harden from the fatty deposits that have built up over time. This makes it harder for your blood to circulate.

And if there's too much of a blockage in your heart, this could form into a clot and cause a **stroke**.

Your bones won't fare any better because all that weight creates a **strain** on your body. It wears out your hips and knees faster, damaging the joints.

Obesity also comes full circle as far as your sleep is concerned.

You'll be more prone to **obstructive sleep apnea**, which is when the soft tissue in the back of your throat collapses.

This causes a blockage in the airway and stops someone's breathing for short periods of time at night. This affects the quality of your sleep and can **make you drowsy** during your waking hours.

Not only that, the extra weight also puts pressure on your chest wall, making it even harder for you breathe.

**Increased cancer risk** is yet another effect of obesity, which targets a bunch of organs like the breast, colon, gallbladder, prostate and uterus.

And to add insult to injury, obesity is a self-esteem killer too.

With marketing and advertising agencies putting way too much importance on looking a particular body type, it opens up a Pandora's box of **body image issues**.

People struggling with their weight often have to deal with feelings of inadequacy. They're usually the target of harsh criticism and seen as lacking willpower.

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This can create a ripple effect in someone's life, such as being discriminated against, having less work and romantic prospects, and fewer avenues for success.

And with that, let's move on to the next truth about not getting enough sleep...

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## Truth #2: Is Lack of Sleep Stopping Your Success?

*“Sleep is the best meditation.” — Dalai Lama*

Here’s another way to look at sleeping: think of yourself as a **computer**.

Your internal hard drive – a.k.a. your brain – is always busy helping you function throughout the day.

When you’re faced with a situation (be it pleasant or otherwise), your hard drive will retrieve the right file or program to deal with it.

And it does this ALL the time. So in the midst of all this **chaos**, your hard drive won’t have time to close all those files and programs during the day.

Plus, you’re also acquiring or downloading new files into your system because of new information and experiences.

By the time your day’s finished, all those files will be **scattered** across your hard drive instead of being neatly clustered together.

In tech-speak, this is known as “**fragmentation.**”

A hard drive slows down because those files are split all over the place. This makes it longer for you to read the data and other bits of information stored on there.

This is also why it's recommended that you defragment or "defrag" your hard drive. This maintenance process cleans up that clutter so that everything's nice and orderly-like.

In the same way, sleeping gives you the chance to *defrag your mind*.

If you were constantly running all sorts of programs and opening a bunch of files without resting in between...

...your hard drive is going to slow down and **wear itself out**.

Once that happens, you won’t do as well when you’re trying to crush your goals and come up in the world.

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One would even say that the amount of sleep you get is directly tied to your level of success in life.

## Why Your Sleeping Habits are Making Your Dreams Crash and Burn

If being overweight and unhealthy isn't enough, not getting enough rest will also derail your **BIGGEST** goals in life.

Whether you're trying to put up your own business, set up a non-profit organization...

...get that promotion at work, become the world's greatest banjo player, or take care of animals for a living...

...a lack of sleep is a sure-fire way to shoot **ALL** of those down.

How does poor sleep make you mediocre? Let me count the ways:

### #1: Less Brain Power = Less Success

Like I told you a while ago, sleep gives your brain a chance to defrag and optimize itself. Trying to get a respectable amount of work done is going to be a **slow and clunky affair** for you.

Having impaired cognitive functions means you won't pick up on things quite as fast, forget things quickly, can't solve a simple problem, and your creative juices will dry up.

In this state, you'll struggle climbing that ladder to success.

(Chances are you'll have one of those microsleep episodes and fall down a few rungs, too.)

You might say that you know someone at work who eats sleep deprivation for breakfast and is shooting to the top because of it.

Well, let me fill you on a little secret about Mr. (or Ms.) No-Sleep-Superachiever...

That person **isn't** really living up to the hype.

But I'm not telling you to hate them or feel threatened by their success. What I mean is that in this person's mind, he or she isn't living up to their **OWN** hype.

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I promise you that whatever goals they're hitting right now are way **LESS** than what they wanted.

Everyone is good at something, and not having enough rest is limiting their unique talents and skills. So that person who isn't sleeping that much hasn't reached their peak performance.

And if you follow their footsteps, neither will YOU.

## **#2: You'll be an Emotional Trainwreck**

You know this already. It only takes one all-nighter to leave you feeling *raw and vulnerable*.

But you probably haven't given much thought about the impact it has on your work performance.

We just talked about how a lack of sleep messes with your head. But what about your **emotions**?

When it comes to bringing their A-game, most people take for granted how important it is to stay emotionally grounded.

Research shows that emotional intelligence (EI) is a crucial factor in being successful.

Studies from Yale University, as well as books like "Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ," point to the fact that getting a grip on your feelings is an essential trait that you need to cultivate.

In the back of our minds, we understand this fundamental truth.

I mean, throwing a tantrum like a toddler isn't going to help you get a raise, win the respect of your colleagues or make people want to work with you.

Yet, a lot of us ignore how useful our EI is when it comes to dealing with everyday situations at work and in our personal lives.

And quite often, we unconsciously **undermine** our EI through unhealthy habits, such as not getting enough sleep.

But before we go on, let's tackle what it actually means to have a high EQ:

- Self-awareness and empathy are critical: you know exactly what's going on in that heart of yours, not to mention how **other people**, too.

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- On top of awareness, you also know how to deal with the **ebb and flow** of your emotions so that you don't come off the rails.
- Better still, you know how to stabilize other people's emotional state since you have **empathy** for them.
- You're way **less jaded** about the world. With **self-awareness** comes even more awareness about your blessings. In other words, you're just oozing with gratitude for the good things you've got going for you.
- You **don't dwell** on negative emotions. High EQ people are masters of not letting their feelings fuel their thoughts. Instead, they have the awareness (that trait again!) to step back and see the big picture. This way, they can **question their thoughts** (e.g., "I suck at everything!", "This is the worst day of my life!") and find out if there's some shred of truth to it, or if it's just crazy talk.
- They don't create worst-case scenarios in their heads. They know nothing good comes from chewing on "**what if**" kind of thoughts. Instead, they ask themselves, "What can I do to influence the outcome in a constructive way?"

So yeah, acting like an adult (and not behaving like a pre-schooler) is pretty vital if you want to achieve something big.

Without these hallmarks of emotional intelligence, you're basically shooting yourself in the foot.

And for those who get **enough sleep**, emotional intelligence becomes more natural, and more naturally.

Think about this: studies have found that the brain creates harmful proteins while it's doing the heavy lifting for you during the day.

So, one of the reasons why sleep is so important is because it allows your brain to get *rid of this harmful build-up*.

(Remember what I said about "defragging"?)

Thus, skipping on sleep means these proteins will mess with your head during the day. And if your mind isn't right, neither are your emotions.

Oh, and not only that – your stress levels will also hit peak levels.

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### # 3: You'll Turn Into a Stress Magnet

We touched on this a bit earlier, but it deserves a closer look into how it impacts your success.

So previously we said that not sleeping is bad for you and your hormones specifically. **Cortisol**, one of the hormones most associated with stress, is a good indicator of your stress levels.

Cortisol in itself isn't bad. When it kicks in, it puts you in a state that makes you ready to deal with an immediate threat (thanks, evolution!).

You're flooded with energy coming from your natural reserves, such as **glucose**. Then your blood starts pumping in anticipation of an event that you perceive to be stressful.

This is your survival and self-preservation mechanism at work – and it's basically your body making its own **steroids**.

Now, there's nothing with getting a little boost to save your skin at the right moment - like getting in a fist fight or negotiating your way out of a speeding ticket.

But being on cortisol ALL the time can't be good for you.

Steroids – even the ones you make – shouldn't be in your system when the occasion doesn't call for it.

But that's exactly what sleep deprivation does to you.

The University of Chicago came out with a study entitled “Sleep loss results in an elevation of cortisol levels the next evening,” and it shows the link between stress hormone levels and the quality of sleep.

And that will lead to a bunch of nasty complications in the future, such as increased risk of **diabetes and obesity**.

(Didn't we just talk about this a while ago? But there you go...)

One of cortisol's jobs is to spike your blood sugar with glucose to give you the resources to confront a threat or evade it. But being in this heightened state **all the time** means your blood sugar will be high as well.

And as we tackled before, chronically elevated blood sugar levels is the quickest path to insulin resistance, diabetes and weight gain.

We're all about feedback loops today, aren't we?

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And I'll throw one more at you: being stressed out affects your quality of sleep, which, in turn, makes you **MORE** stressed out.

Whew.

So ignoring your body's need to rest will cause you to fall into a **chicken-and-egg** trap which is hard to escape from. And as you've gathered so far, the long-term consequences are anything but pretty.

## Get Some Damn Sleep

You probably know what I'm going to say next, but hey, isn't that the point of this book?

So to drive the point home once again, sleep is a must if you want to operate at 100% and conquer the world.

You can't plan your next big scheme if your head isn't clear and if you're emotionally unstable.

Plus, your body will not like the **abuse** that comes from sleep deprivation. It will also react in other ways, such as impaired digestive functions, courtesy of that **cortisol cocktail**.

That means indigestion, a **weaker gut-barrier** (which is directly tied to immunity) and a messed-up metabolism. If you can't thoroughly enjoy a basic necessity like food nor get the proper nourishment, it only compounds the overall problem.

Your immune system gets caught in crossfire too since cortisol also subdues your natural immune response (like inflammation). That breaks the gates wide open for a host of sicknesses, and other conditions such as allergies and **autoimmune disease**.

Now, you're starting to see the critical role that sleep deprivation plays in this whole mess.

So what I'm getting at is that getting enough sleep can throw a wrench into this unhealthy, vicious cycle.

But how do you get started doing that, exactly?

Don't worry – we'll get to that soon enough.

There's just one more thing we need to get out of the way...

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### Truth #3: Is Lack of Sleep Preventing True Happiness?

*“When it becomes really impossible to get away and sleep, then the will to live evaporates of its own accord.” — Louis-Ferdinand Céline*

With everything we’ve talked about so far, it’s not really much of a stretch to imagine how not sleeping enough will make you **miserable** in the long run.

After all, you’re putting on weight, increasing your risk of serious diseases like diabetes and cancer, and you’re putting your dreams of success in jeopardy.

That’s not a pretty picture now, is it?

I’m just guessing here, but this less-than-ideal-scenario won’t make anyone a happy camper.

### Why Does Sleep Deprivation Make Us Gloomy?

Now that you’ve made it this far, this seems like an obvious question. But let’s take a more in-depth look into the matter.

In a recent research paper led by the University of Pennsylvania, experts explored the connection between the quality of **sleep and happiness**.

Their study is called “Insomnia Symptom Severity Modulates The Impact of Sleep Deprivation on Attentional Biases to Emotional Information,” which is quite a mouthful.

At the heart of it, the researchers are telling us that for the most part, people have a **glass-half-full mindset**. They claim that we pay more attention to the pleasant elements in our surroundings rather than the stuff that annoys us.

What’s interesting is that their findings indicate that people tend to do the opposite when they’re sleep deprived.

The study looked at participants who volunteered to stay up way past their usual bedtime – some in the vicinity of 28 hours!

There were a total of 40 adults, and the other half had a regular sleeping schedule of eight hours.

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The researchers tested the sleep-deprived and well-rested groups, then measured their responses. They were made to look at various faces and identify whether each one expressed happiness, sadness or an emotionally neutral state.

What they found was that the drowsier group didn't pay as much attention to the faces which expressed happiness.

Here's the takeaway from the test: people who are depressed often don't see the lighter side of things and get trapped in negative thought patterns.

As a result, their level of happiness is way lower than people who aren't depressed.

In the same vein, sleep deprivation has the same effects on someone. As their test proved, the participants struggled to see the positive aspects of their environment.

And more importantly, this mindset can set the stage for **depression** in the long run.

So when you make a habit of sleeping past your bedtime, it's not hard to feel like dirt the next morning. Millions of people go about their day without being aware that this simple habit is silently eroding the ground beneath them.

Slowly but surely, they become more lethargic and less excited about the things they used to be psyched about.

Their work, hobbies and pursuits have **lost their appeal**, and they don't why.

It doesn't occur to them until the sinkhole of depression finally opens up from under them.

This isn't just about feeling crabby – everyone has a bad day every now and then.

When you're legitimately devoid of all happiness and enthusiasm...

... see life as bleak and utterly meaningless...

...and start believing that you're a big, fat, worthless loser...

...then you've got a **problem** on your hands.

Depression doesn't just hurt you, but also your family, friends and colleagues.

And other studies have found that people with sleeping disorders are far more likely to be depressed. The lousier your sleep is, the easier it is to spiral into depression.

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## Is it the Chicken or the Egg (Here We Go Again)?

Like all of the other conditions associated with sleep deprivation, poor mental health fuels yet another unhealthy cycle.

So far, studies show that depression and a lack of sleep have a tendency to feed on each other.

In a nutshell, not getting enough rest messes with brain activity and the chemicals in your head (called neurotransmitters) that regulate emotion.

So you tumble into the office looking like something the cat dragged in, **feeling lousy** all day.

Now that you're in this state, that dark, gloomy cloud hanging over is going to follow you all the way into the bedroom.

According to experts, going to bed in a raw, emotional state will screw up your sleeping patterns.

So that puts you right in the middle of a swirling vortex, tossing you **back and forth** between sleeplessness and depression.

The truth is that the experts haven't quite put together all the pieces of the sleep-depression puzzle. And sleep researchers haven't fully figured out which causes which.

But so far, everything they've uncovered shows a definite **correlation** between these two disorders.

If I had to take an educated stab at it though, I'd say that a lack of sleep certainly makes it easier to jumpstart this whole mess.

Once sleep deprivation gets into the mix, it's going to kick up a storm of health problems down the line.

And in the process, it's going to *take a toll* on your **happiness**.

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## What Do I Do About it Now?

Before we go any further, let me share an important reminder.

If you're feeling depressed for more than two weeks in a row, it's in everyone's best interest (especially yours) that you *seek professional help*.

It doesn't matter if it's caused by a lack of sleep or other factors that fall outside this book.

And of course, establishing a solid foundation for healthy sleeping habits will make a **HUGE** impact on your health and the quality of your life (which we'll get to shortly).

But as your friend, I also want to emphasize that **counseling** has its place in your overall well-being.

So if you're dealing with disproportionately negative thoughts that revolve around hopelessness and low self-worth...

...please, *please*, see a licensed counselor ASAP.

Without further ado, here are my **6 Super Effective Tips to Kick Sleep Deprivation to the Curb and Take Back Your Health (AND Life!):**

### **#1: Get Your Sleeping Schedule In Order**

In the book "Why We Sleep," Matthew Walker observes that our lifestyle today is **incredibly demanding**.

After the Industrial Revolution in the 18<sup>th</sup> century ushered in a new era, it gradually changed the way people lived – and *how they slept*.

Today, we're sleeping LESS than ever, thanks to our fast-paced way of living.

And if you're going to survive the chaos of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, you'll need an anchor to keep you steady. That's where a **consistent sleep schedule** comes in.

Like I said before, there's no getting around biology. Your body's sleeping and waking hours are based on a **circadian rhythm**.

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Going back to our computer analogy, think of it as a program running in the background. Your circadian rhythm determines when you should get up and hit the sack.

Fun fact: plants and animals have their own circadian rhythms, too.

But the difference is that they don't stay up late at night to check their social media feed or binge on Netflix. That puts humans in worse shape, as far as sleep is concerned.

So, planning your sleeping hours helps you protect this hardwired function instead of disrupting it.

Your first priority is to decide on a **fixed time** to get up in the morning, then work your way back 7-8 hours.

For instance, someone who wants to be out of bed 6:00 am would need to be settled in by around 9:30 pm. That gives them enough time to wind down and sleep by 10:00 pm.

You really need to put your foot down and **stick to your schedule** as much as you can.

Cultivating this one habit will help a lot in keeping you grounded and stable during the day.

It's going to take some time to reset your sleeping patterns, but it will happen sooner than you think.

## **#2: Set the Stage**

Here's the other thing about your circadian rhythm: it operates on sunlight –and a lack thereof.

Bright light is a cue for your body to wake up, while darkness acts as a signal for you to slow down and rest.

So, it makes sense to set up your bedroom and make it an **ideal environment** for quality rest.

- Sleep is the **only activity** your bed should be associated with. Anything else needs to be done outside. You might want to read or listen to music, too. Studies show that these two specific bedtime rituals help you unplug and relax, promoting a deeper sleep afterward.
- Invest in a good set of pillows and blankets, as well as a mattress. They should help you sleep better at night by supporting your neck and back, and keeping you warm.

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- Speaking of which, set your thermostat to around **60 to 70 degrees Fahrenheit**. According to the National Sleep Foundation, your body temperature drops when you're trying to sleep, and this is the optimal range for snoozing.
- Block out and remove any distracting stimuli near your bed. Take out anything that could disturb you, and get an eye mask and earplugs if needed. While you're at it, get good curtains that **block out any light** from getting in.

### **#3: Go Outside**

No, not at night. What I mean is that you should clear some time in your week to explore nature during the day.

Remember, your circadian rhythm thrives on **natural light** to keep you awake. So getting a good dose of sun will reset your built-in sleep mechanism and keep it on schedule.

Whether it's playing sports, taking a nice, relaxing walk, hitting a jogging trail or just kicking back with a cup of coffee and a good book, the outdoors is a great venue.

Do a little digging online and sniff out the best spots in your local area for outdoor activities. Be on the hunt for botanical gardens, nearby parks, wildlife reservations, and the like.

Aside from getting sunlight, all that walking and moving around is definitely good for your heart!

### **#4: Throw Away Your Phone**

Just kidding -but it wouldn't kill you to turn it off before bedtime.

A lot of sleep deprived folks underestimate how much their laptops and mobile devices erode the quality of their sleep. They think that watching a movie or scrolling through their social media page in bed will help them wind down.

But what's really happening is that the **blue light** from screens is a lot similar to actual sunlight. And the brighter it is, the harder it is for your body to produce **melatonin**, a sleep hormone.

That's not good news because using electronic devices at night will confuse your circadian rhythm and mess with your sleep schedule.

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I recommend that you power down your devices **two hours** before heading off to bed. This gives your body enough time to initiate the sleep cycle.

Watching TV is marginally better since you're further away (compared to a smartphone that's in your face). But in any case, have a cut-off for screen time to enjoy a deeper, more restful sleep at night.

## **#5: Eat Anti-Stress Foods**

According to a study from the University of Bristol in the U.K., what goes into your gut has a direct effect on your emotional well-being.

This is what experts call the **gut-brain connection**. They've discovered that the gut (made up of your stomach and intestines) has hundreds of millions of nerve cells and neurons.

Some call this the "little brain" that lives in your gut. It sends signals to your big brain, telling you when you're hungry or full.

Your gut also affects your mood levels, too. Depending on what you eat, it can make you relaxed, agitated, happy or sad.

So snacking on certain foods that contain **melatonin** can help you drift off into a peaceful sleep.

Here are a few ideas you can try:

- Almonds, peanuts, walnuts, cashews
- Apples, avocado, dried prunes, grapes and goji berries
- Bananas
- Blueberries
- Chamomile, passion fruit or peppermint tea
- Cheese
- Cheese (with toast, crackers or fruits)
- Grains such as wheat, rice, barley, corn, oats, rice, barley, rolled oats
- Oatmeal (and Oatmeal cookies)

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- Seeds like flaxseed, mustard seeds and sunflower
- Turkey, chicken, sardines, salmon and tuna
- Vegetables like cucumber, spinach, broccoli or asparagus
- Warm whole milk or almond milk
- Whole wheat toast (plus jam, peanut butter or almond butter)
- Yogurt

These foods are loaded with magnesium, tryptophan and calcium. Together, they can influence the chemistry in your gut and help you fall asleep faster.

Also, it's best to eat these about an hour before sleeping. Don't forget that these should be taken as a **snack**. You don't want to strain your digestive system while you're trying to sleep.

Also, have your last cup of coffee (no more than 3-4 cups or 400mg of caffeine) by about 3pm. This gives you time to metabolize and make use of it way before you plan to sleep.

## #6: Cut Down on the Cortisol

You learned earlier that this hormone has a significant influence on your stress levels. It's a good idea to manage this if you want to sleep at night.

Limiting cortisol production will also help you **break up the sleep-stress cycle** that's depriving you of valuable rest.

This is also the key to stabilizing your circadian rhythm, which will make it easier for you to fall asleep and wake up.

Don't get me wrong – at the right time and place, moderate levels of cortisol are helpful.

It can get you through the most challenging parts of your day, but you'll need to decompress when you're off the clock.

Here are some practical tips to help you let off some steam in a healthy way:

- **Banish the processed stuff from your diet.** I know it's hard to let go of donuts, ice cream, and pizza -along with those healthy foods with the “low-fat” or “sugar-free”

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labels. None of those compare to whole, unprocessed foods with the micronutrients that your body needs. Trust me, detoxing your cupboard and eating the good stuff will help you sleep better at night.

- **If you can, get in some exercise before you start your day.** Research shows that it's easier to cultivate the habit when you do it in the morning. It also leaves you feeling pumped and ready to tackle the rest of the day.
- **Take a crack at mindfulness and meditation.** Mindfulness is the art of focusing on the present moment. This is also the ideal state for doing meditation, which is the practice of sitting still and letting a sense of calm wash over you. Studies show a significant improvement in people who practice this habit, such as better sleep. Even five minutes of doing this every day will add up in the long run.

The more you practice these simple habits, the better you can cope with a crazy week and keep those stress levels down.

Best of all, less stress means better sleep, which leads to less stress.

It goes round and round, remember? If you're going to get stuck in a cycle, it might as well be a **HEALTHY** one.

## My Own Battle With Sleep

Now that we've reached the end of our little journey through the often ignored truths about sleep deprivation...

...I'd like to share a bit of my **personal struggles** with the matter.

The main reason why I came up with this book is that I used to grapple with this problem myself.

So, I decided to help other people stuck in the same boat, and find a way out of it.

You see, for the longest time, I couldn't get decent sleep. And like everyone else, it was wrecking my health, killing my career and ruining my life.

But my problem wasn't the quantity of sleep I was getting – it was the **QUALITY**.

I didn't know it back then, but I wasn't getting the **RIGHT** kind of sleep.

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And as much as I slept – like 8-9 hours on most nights – I woke up not feeling refreshed at all. I felt like a **ton of bricks** and had to drag myself out of bed.

The lethargy wouldn't leave me as I went about my day. I was at my rope's end.

That's when I set out to solve the mystery of the non-sleep I was getting.

Over the course of a few months, I fell into a rabbit hole of research, going through dense scientific studies, books, articles and just about every scrap of information on the topic.

And as I came up for air, I stumbled upon yet another truth about sleep deprivation.

Remember when we talked about melatonin? Aside from eating food that had it, I resorted to taking melatonin supplements to help me sleep.

What I found out was that they had an *addictive* side effect and made you dependent on them.

Eventually, these supplements no longer did the trick for me because I grew desensitized to them. Worse, I realized that it also messes with the natural equilibrium of neurochemicals in the brain.

At that point, it hit me that I needed to **BALANCE** my melatonin and other hormone levels.

This was also when I discovered a set of breathing techniques – seven of them, to be exact – and it made a profound impact on my life.

I did one of these for every day of the week, and in a matter of minutes, I slept **peacefully**.

It was like clockwork, and I woke up feeling like a million bucks, ready to take on the world again. I hadn't felt that level of energy in almost a **decade!**

As it turns out, there's an obscure scientific principle behind these breathing exercises. No one really thought much about them – let alone their impact on the quality of a person's sleep.

What it does is that these exercises tap directly into your **nervous system**. They also even out your melatonin levels instead of raising them **TOO MUCH**.

Thus, your heart rate goes down, along with your blood pressure and cortisol levels.

This simple shift in my bedtime routine helped me get the kind of sleep I really needed.

As a result, I got my life **back on track**.

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I probably dodged a huge, heart-disease-sized bullet, too. My doctor had warned me repeatedly that I had to get my blood pressure down if I wanted to get rid of my hypertension.

And now that you know the three crucial truths about not sleeping...

...and how to take your own life back and start enjoying it...

...there's no going back.

I'd like you to check out this video presentation now so you can learn these breathing techniques as well:

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