

HOW TO STAY SANE IN A MAD WORLD

This seems to be the hardest thing for most people to do - take time out for themselves. Stress and working long hours can leave you feeling fatigued and is also a strain on good health. Taking Time Out for yourself is actually great for your health- something a lot of people find hard to believe.

Here are some facts about how to relax and sleep better and why it's a good skill to develop.

- Down time requirements can vary widely from one person to the next, but most people need eight to nine hours of sleep each night for good health and clear thoughts.
- Deep sleep and meditation provide a chance for the body to rest and repair. Research also suggests that deep sleep allows for more antibody production and stimulates the immune system.
- Relaxation also allows the body to lower its blood pressure and properly rejuvenate. It does this by taking the stress off the brain and major organs.

Studies show that most people do not get the amount of relaxation they need to reap these benefits, however. To help you get your proper rest, here are some shortcut ideas to help you destress and get the healthy benefits that relaxation has to offer.

Learn the art of Power Napping:

This happens to be a personal favorite! If you have to stay up late for work or other functions, take a nap before hand. However, try not to nap too close to bedtime as it could interrupt your normal sleep pattern.

Meditate:

If sleep time is at a premium and a nap is out of the question, take 20 minutes during the day to rest, relax and meditate. Meditation has proven to rejuvenate the body, reinvigorate the mind and leave you feeling refreshed and renewed. Simply sit in a comfortable chair and allow yourself to take 20 minutes to regroup. Just focus on squeezing and relaxing each of your major muscle groups in conjunction with your breath. The relaxation response will kick on in and you will feel a lot more refreshed and relaxed.

Exercise Regularly:

Most of you have already experienced an improvement in your sleep due to the increase in exercise you have been doing over the last nine weeks. Exercising regularly has been shown to improve sleep patterns and improve the quality of sleep at night. By exercising the body, you are getting a one-two punch; it is a superb way to relieve the body of stress and induces the restful, deep sleep, which gives you the benefits we've discussed.

Eat A Healthy Breakfast:

All of you now eat a regular breakfast. This gives you energy and keeps you going throughout the day. Starting off on an empty tank not only leaves you at risk for lethargy, but it leaves your body forced to metabolise secondary sources of fuel moving it into starvation mode. This can wreak havoc with weight as well, leaving you feeling as if you are running on empty. So don't miss breakfast- even on Christmas Day!

Be Careful Of Stimulants:

Along the lines of eating a healthy breakfast is the avoidance of over using caffeine or

other stimulants for energy - caffeine although an enjoyable beverage (and some studies make the case that it's "good" for you) should not be used in place of a good night's sleep. Once the stimulant wears off it will leave you feeling lethargic, ready to "crash and burn."

Get Into Bed Before 9 One Night A Week:

If you find that you are unable to sleep enough during the week, be sure to fuel up at least one night during the course of the week. Getting in bed early just one evening of the week can give you the rest and rejuvenation you need to see you through the work week.

A Word About Headaches:

A sign that you are not getting enough sleep is tense muscles of the head and neck. This can often lead to headaches. Many relaxation methods are often just as effective as standard medication in prevention or relieving the pain of a headache. If you are prone to headaches and are running on little sleep try this:

Run a warm bath to alleviate tension and relax, or try a footbath to move the blood supply from your head to your feet. Soak your feet or your body in warm water, adding hot water at 5-minute intervals. Run cooler water until the temperature is lukewarm. Dry off and lie down for 20 minutes.

If you're not sure how much sleep you actually need, try this fun exercise over a few days

Go to bed at the same time each night and notice what time you wake up in the morning without an alarm. If you continue to feel tired when you wake up, gradually move your bedtime earlier until you wake up naturally and feel well rested. After you've discovered your body's requirements and tried some of these simple exercises you should be well on your way to enjoying a healthy, low stress and restful lifestyle.

© Shirley Hicks, 2009. Reprints are ok so long as by-line and article are published intact and all links are made live.

About Shirley:

Shirley Hicks publishes her monthly Healthy Matters newsletter for clients and people interested in creating a happier, healthier lifestyle. If you want more happiness and health in your life, then sign up for her Healthy Matters E-zine. If you liked this article then why not download Shirley's FREE e-book, *16 EASY STEPS TO RENEW YOUR ENERGY* FREE for you today.

www.shirleyhicks.com.au