



HELPS

Health Enhancement for Lifelong Professional Students

Sleep? Who needs it?

Lack of sleep is a common complaint among graduate and professional students. It may seem that you'll have to wait until you finish grad school before you get a decent night's sleep again. What risks do you take when you are sleep-deprived? How might you be jeopardizing your health as well as your grade point average?

You might be surprised at what researchers are discovering about how sleep loss affects us, and what you can do to minimize the risks.

How Sleep Loss Affects Us

"Some tasks appear to be much more difficult to

perform with a sleep deficit, and our studies show that there can be variability in the performance of nearly any task in the sleep-deprived," says David Dinges, Ph.D., professor of Psychology in Psychiatry at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine and director of the Division of Sleep and Chronobiology. "It may be difficult to pay attention over prolonged periods, and even short duration tasks can be affected. This may include tasks that involve memory, executive function and complex decisions."

Researchers at the University of Pennsylvania continue to explore the complex links between sleep deprivation and perform-

ance. "Some of our recent findings are somewhat surprising, as we had assumed that chronic sleep deprivation affects everyone's performance in the same way," Dinges says. "Our discoveries seem counterintuitive. As our research subjects were deprived of sleep over time, the differences in performance became larger and larger. Some people had very rapid rates of performance degradation, some were in the middle range, and still others showed few or no effects."

Minimize Your Risks

For grad students, who may be working, attending school and juggling family responsibilities, the consequences of sleep debt may not show up on the job or on campus, but on the way home. You may be able to function well at work and manage to stay focused during an evening class or study session, but sleepiness may kick in while you're driving home, putting you at risk for an accident.

You can also put your health at risk by relying on sugar-laden snacks or caffeine to keep you alert.

Regardless of how lack of sleep affects you, there are some things you can do

to minimize the risks that accompany it. "Know your limits and vulnerabilities, and try to get sleep before you know you will be deprived," Dinges recommends. "Then make sure you allow a period of recovery sleep."

Changes like eliminating 'vegetative' activities in favor of friendships, intimacy and personal care can counterbalance periods of sleep deprivation. Dinges also suggests taking naps when possible. "When you have to sleep in the daytime, turn off your cell phone, TV and radio, blacken windows and wear earplugs to maximize the sleep environment."

These are all fairly easy solutions, but effective for establishing patterns of behavior in which you can recharge your batteries. If you suspect insomnia or apnea—even if you think

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How Much Sleep Do You Need?

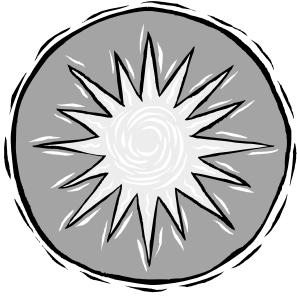
"Each one of us has a unique sleep requirement," Michael H. Bonnet Ph.D. and Donna L. Arand Ph.D. report. "Our sleep need depends upon genetic and physiological factors and also varies by age, sex, and previous sleep amounts. However, a simple definition of sufficient sleep is a sleep duration that is followed by a spontaneous awakening and leaves one feeling refreshed and alert for the day."

Source: "How Much Sleep Do Adults Need?" white paper by Michael H. Bonnet Ph.D. and Donna L. Arand Ph.D., Dayton Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Wright State University, and Kettering Medical Center.

We want you to thrive, not just survive, at USF

The Health Enhancement for Lifelong Professional Students program can assist when you're not sure where to turn.

HELPS is available for you 24/7: 813-870-0184



**HELPS 24-hour
phone line:
813-870-0184**

HELPS is administered by:

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Sleep? Who needs it?

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it's induced by your nonstop schedule—it's important to be evaluated at a sleep disorder center to identify a

treatable disorder now, before it becomes a chronic problem.

Prioritizing sleep in your lifestyle can have long-term

benefits, Dinges says. "It should be part of your schedule, not just what is left over after everything else."

Giving Yourself the Gift of Time

You deserve some time just for yourself, your family and your friends. Yet you have so little time to spend on anything besides your professional responsibilities. Organization expert Denise Landers, author of *Destination Organization*, offers these tips for carving out time for yourself:

- Take an honest look at all the tasks that must be done, and delegate what you don't love doing.
- Block out periods of uninterrupted time. Every time you are interrupted, it takes about 20 minutes to get back into the flow of what you were doing.
- Skip the multitasking. You will be far more focused if you don't task your brain with doing two things at once.
- Keep an interruption log for two weeks. Once you identify what is getting you off track, you can start making changes.
- Schedule it. Include everything that is important to you in your weekly schedule—work, key events, time with family and friends, meals, exercise, and sleep. Some days you may only have a window of 20 minutes here and there, but if it's in your schedule you can make the most of it. Take notes about what didn't work and adjust the next week's schedule.
- Don't put accomplishing tasks over your relationships with other people.

Resources

National Sleep Foundation: www.sleepfoundation.org

Sleep Research Society: www.sleepresearchsociety.org

Key Organization: www.keyorganization.com

Denise Landers' Blog:

www.keyorganization.com/blog/5-ways-to-save-time-this-holiday-season

"The Myth of Multitasking: How 'Doing it All' Gets Nothing Done," by Dave Crenshaw, John Wiley & Sons (2008)

"The Now Habit," by Neil Fiore, Penguin Group (2007)

Tutoring: A Flexible and Potentially Profitable Sideline

Thinking about tutoring for a little extra cash? You might be on the right track. Tutors can make more than \$100 an hour, reports author and former tutor Erin Quinn O'Briant, MFA. Her website Tutoring-Expert.com explains how. The site offers a wealth of resources for prospective tutors with free site information adapted from the guidebook *Be a Great Tutor*. The site details the author's four steps to successfully starting a tutoring business and includes tips on presenting oneself both in person and online. Not sure how much to charge? The Tutoring Jobs page offers a detailed analysis of the types of work available and the rates tutors earn depending on qualifications and location. The site also allows tutors to build their reputation and online presence with free, easy-to-use tools.