Sleep As Elixir: Beautiful Body, Beautiful Mind, Beautiful Life

Are you driving while asleep at the wheel of life? Lack of sleep is the new DWI. Pull over and get some sleep before life happens to you without your consent.

> *Sleep-deprived drivers have a similar reaction time behind the wheel as drivers with a blood alcohol content of 0.089 (that's DWI), a sobering fact when you consider that nearly 30 percent of all drivers have admitted to falling asleep or nodding off while behind the wheel!"— Cleveland Clinic*

I always get a kick out of how people think of sleep as something that is optional. We stay up later, we get up earlier, work longer, faster, more. Even our down time is packed full of activities that deplete and exhaust us in the name of having a fun weekend. What ever happened to the value of a nap or getting to bed early? We take a perverse pride in working extra long hours, staying up late, and cheating our bodies and minds of needed rest.

Our culture is all about being "larger than life," supersizing everything, doing more (and more and more). It demands more caffeine and stimulants like screen time to get that constant stream of micro highs as we are "liked" or "connected" on social media. At the end of the day we are exhausted, but not satisfied. We counteract the buzz of our thoughts by taking sleeping pills or drinking a glass of wine or beer to unwind. Like never before, we are overweight, stressed, fatigued and overwhelmed by our lifestyle of doing more.

Women are often the worst offenders. Women are doing more than ever and believing that SUPER should be added to every role:

SUPERmom, SUPERlover, SUPERworker, SUPERboss, SUPERfriend, SUPERwoman. Whether at the office, home, social circle, or gym, women feel they are failing and falling into that kind of exhaustion that has no fulfillment in it.

What if I told you that I had a simple remedy that would:

- ENHANCE your memory, mood, concentration, outlook and perspective
- INCREASE your physical ability, immunity and overall energy
- PROMOTE your weight loss, give you younger looking skin, and heal you on all cylinders
- REDUCE your stress, anxiety, overall fatigue, and physical injury
- LOWER both your blood pressure and the likelihood of you making mistakes
- PUMP up your sex life (oh la-la), creativity, and your ability to make connections and bonding

You agree that if I DID have a remedy that could do all of these things, I would be Oprah's newest hottest thing, right? Well, there *actually is* a remedy out there that does everything on the list above. I'm not kidding. I know, you're now wondering how much it's going to cost you.

Nothing. It's free, available to all.

Sleep is that magic elixir. Sleep is the new revolutionary healer of all. Dream on!

According to Huffington Post's creator, Arianna Huffington, sleep is her secret weapon, the magic to her success. Her advice to women around the world, "Sleep your way to the top." But, like most women, Huffington didn't always think this way. Only after collapsing at her desk from exhaustion and ending up with a series of stitches and a huge wake up call did she make this realization.

We have a national sleep deficit epidemic. Even though we don't value the elixir that only sleep provides, we pay thousands of dollars on tips, tricks, products, and supplements to make us appear rested. Strong women leaders such as Huffington are fed up with this unsustainable lifestyle. It is not only exhausting, it is also causing the kind of physical, mental, emotional, and cultural harm that sucks the joy out of life.

Cheating on sleep for work and our busy lives doesn't make us super heroes, it just leaves us tired. Lack of sleep deprives us of how amazing and "on" we get to be when we are rested, refreshed, and energized. When we don't sleep enough, we aren't fully here and fully alive. We fail at giving the gift of who we are and all we can be. Our beloved family, friends, and the communities where we want to make a difference are robbed by our own lack of sleep. And it isn't just our mental and emotional selves that suffer. Our bodies can't repair and heal when we starve them from the process of healing and resetting that happens *only* in sleep.

Sleep isn't a luxury, or even optional. It is as essential to living a healthy life as oxygen.

"Sleep is absolutely essential for basic maintenance and repair of the neurological, endocrine, immune, musculoskeletal, and digestive systems," says Chris Kressor.

If you've ever tried to have a coherent conversation with new parents, you understand the dramatic effects of lack of sleep on our ability to recall facts, figures, and basics like which shoe goes on which foot. In all seriousness, the impact that lack of sleep has on our memory, emotional state, and body is only now starting to be understood. Missing sleep impacts our ability to recall things, not only small details, like remembering to pick up more eggs at the market, but our long-term ability to recall information and create lasting memories.

Lack of sleep can not only lower your I.Q. a few points, it can actually make you crazy!

Neuroscientist, Jeffrey Iliff connects the dots between lack of sleep and the rise of neurological disorders later in life such as dementia, Alzheimer's and overall memory loss. Think about it this way, the brain is the command center of our body. When that control deck is not up to snuff, what happens? When we push ourselves without resting and restoring, we put our brains into overdrive. With constant tasks, duties, stress, and stimulation, the brain is overloaded and, even worse, without proper sleep it is depleted from it's only source of renewal and downtime.

It turns out sleep isn't a passive activity. There's all sorts of amazing stuff going on in our bodies and, especially our brain, when we're asleep. A good night's sleep can improve your memory, and keep your brain healthy in the short- and long-term. It also helps us think better, solve problems, and make deeper connections.

A well-rested mind is a clean mind. Not that kind of clean. Wink wink. Healthy clean.

All throughout the day we produce a type of toxic protein called beta-amyloid that tends to collect in the brain and the spinal cord. A new study shows promising evidence that our bodies have a special mechanism to remove this toxin, but *only* when we sleep. In our sleep, our glymphatic system pumps cerebrospinal fluid through our central nervous system, flushing that toxin from our body. As it turns out, the only time this type of CSM fluid matter is discarded is during our REM (Rapid Eye Movement) sleep cycle, or deep sleep.

Our limbic system – which is connected to senses, memory and dreams – is one part of the brain that is turned on while we slumber. When the lights are out in the rest of the body, this portion of the brain is awake and kicking. It's been

understood that while sleep is necessary for physical health, strength, resilience, and such, it also renews and restores our spirit and emotional connection.

Though exactly what happens biologically and physiologically is still a mystery, we now know there is a purpose (scientifically proven!) for why we dream. In our sleep we seem to access a deeper level of thinking. Our mind makes connections with the unknown or unconscious to help solve problems, create solutions, and mend upsets that happened during the day. We resolve things from the waking day during our sleep – that fight with a co worker, how to deal with the emotions of a breakup, or even remembering where we left the keys.

Sleep often unsticks us when we have a creative block. Think about a time when you were burning the midnight oil attempting to kick out a creative project, only to be met by a huge block. Frustrated, you hit the sack. The next morning you awake revived and replenished and *boom*, there it is, a new idea or spark of inspiration that you just couldn't see in your sleep deprived state the night before. I know some will say, "but I've always been a night owl," or "I do my most creative thinking at night." This maybe true, but when we are lacking sleep, our bodies and brains are in survival mode and can only function for so long until we crash and burn. Believe me, lack of sleep will catch up with you. If you think your natural biorhythm makes you shine at night, adjust your schedule to sleep during the day (see below for some helpful tips – you'll sleep best if you block out all of that day light).

When we start to value our sleep and see the importance of it's healing power not only for today, but for our future selves, we start to think and do things differently. When we take care of ourselves with a good sleep habit, we are more present and able to take care of others and contribute to the projects that fulfill our sense of purpose. Could there be

anything more powerful than being fully awake, rested, and ready to take life on with all of our cylinders firing?

Here are a few things you can do to start getting a good night's rest. Like anything else, it takes time to start a new habit; even sleeping well takes practice!

Tips for Good Sleep Hygiene

- Don't be too full – or too hungry
- Go to bed early! Most of us have active REM between 11 p.m. and 3 a.m.
- Relax and stretch lightly before going to bed.
- Practice makes permanent changes.
- Reduce your exposure to artificial light.
- Don't use a computer/iphone/ipad for 2 hours before going to bed. Exposure to screens can disturb your sleep.
- Use blackout shades to make your bedroom pitch black.
- Cover your digital alarm clock or get an analog clock.
- Turn off all digital devices that glow or give off any type of light.
- If you can't do these things for some reason, use a sleep mask.

Spread the word and start a sleep revolution. Tips for good sleep hygiene.

It takes time to restore and get your good sleep on! During my teens and 20's I was destructive with my body, and I didn't take good care of myself. When I gave up partying, I replaced it with perfectionism and overwork. I had been sleep deprived for as long as I can remember, until I started to "wake up" to how much of a negative impact it was having. Only during the last year have I noticed that I have *not* been saying "I'm so tired!" And, this is after several years of actually sleeping regularly, mind you. So don't expect the elixir of sleep to make a difference overnight. Lasting results come from

practice.

Think of how long it has taken for you to become this tired and exhausted (a lifetime). It will take time to rebuild your sleep storage account, but you will get there. I don't feel sleepy during the day any longer, nor do I repeat the dreaded mantra, "I'm so tired."

Everyone needs a different amount of zzz's each night. I have friends who get 5 hours of sleep and seem to be healthy and productive. They take care of themselves, nap when needed, and feel great with their sleep routine and hygiene. *I* do best with 8 hours. How do you know how much sleep *you* need? Only you will know. Over time you'll find the pattern that fits you best. Remember it takes time to make changes. Be patient and gentle with yourself. You deserve to be well rested, healthy, happy, and joyful!

Recommended Supplements:

- Shillington's Nerve Sedative Formula
- L-Tryptophan
- Stress B-Complex • 60c – Thorne Research
- SleepThru – Gaia Herbs
- Sleep & Relax – Gaia Herbs
- Shillington's Cal-Calm Tea
- Skullcap Herb – Gaia Herbs
- More supplements for insomnia

Further Reading:

- *Natural Remedies for Insomnia*
- *Thyroid Disease Epidemic – How is Yours Doing?*
- *Natural Remedies for Adrenal Fatigue*
- *Mental Health, Physical Health & B Vitamins – Nature's Valium*
- *Earthing – Touching Earth*
- *Earthing – Ground Your Body for Optimal Health*