

Sleep Times



Did You Know

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Message from the President

In our last newsletter we shared information about insomnia. This newsletter highlights more information about insomnia and its relationship to stress. Stress, tension and worry are the most frequent negative reactions to today's hectic lifestyles, and they also are the most common reasons that prevent us from getting enough sleep.

Sincerely,
Mary O'Sullivan
President

What is Stress?

Stress is often described as feeling like we have one foot on the accelerator and the other on the brake. Our body never reaches a proper balance. Although occasional stress will not affect us, a large number of stress producers at one time, or over a prolonged period, will eventually take their toll.

Stress is a by-product of living; no matter what happens during the course of our day there will be some stress involved. It is not a person, place or thing, but physical and emotional reactions to changing situations or events. Stress has two sides — positive and negative — although it usually is perceived as negative.

Positive stress is essential for us to live enjoyable, stimulating lives and is the impetus that adds zest to our lives by helping us to feel upbeat and excited and motivates us to take positive action. Stress becomes negative or harmful when we experience too many difficult situations and events at one time, such as problems at work or involvement in some on-going financial, marital or interpersonal problem. Then our ability to cope begins to fail, and the ensuing stress causes a number of negative physical and emotional reactions. *Difficulty sleeping is a common result.*

Factors That Cause Stress

Although other people and problems called "outside stressors" contribute to our stress, it is our own perception and reaction to life events that determines whether they will be beneficial or harmful. Where do our perceptions and responses come from? Genetic makeup is a factor, but our stressful responses come primarily from

Frequent Stress Producers

- Relationship Conflicts
- Job Difficulties
- Financial Concerns
- Health Problems
- Time Schedules
- Day-to-Day Problems
- Personal Fears

Symptoms of Stress-Related Insomnia

- Taking longer than 15 minutes to go to sleep
- Falling asleep as soon as your head hits the pillow
- Waking up frequently
- Sleeping lightly and have trouble relaxing during sleep
- Waking up tense, tired, or emotionally down
- Waking up with aches and pains
- Sleeping less than 4-6 hours or more than 8-10 hours

The Value of Sleep

- Feel better
- Have more energy
- Get more done
- Think more clearly
- **Live life more safely**
- Have better relationships
- Enjoy life more...

When you get enough sleep!

our internal learning: *our positive and negative attitudes, feelings about self, and the expectations and beliefs we hold.* We learn these attitudes and beliefs from significant people in our childhood, such as our parents, family members, friends and caregivers.

Who are stress-prone people? They are usually tense, fearful and impatient individuals. Often referred to as Type-A personalities, they are also driven, conflicted, competitive and work-oriented with a strong need to prove themselves.

What Happens When the Stress Response is Activated?

When we encounter a situation or change that we perceive to be harmful or threatening, our brain responds and activates the stress response. The stress response (also known as the fight or flight response) is an instinctual response for self protection. It provided early ancestors with added energy and strength to fight or flee a hostile environment.

Today this automatic response is still being turned on by real threats, but also by “imagined” fears. The brain is not always able to distinguish between a real or imagined situation. It can’t determine whether our physical safety is truly being threatened, or whether we are simply feeling an emotional threat. It only senses a perceived threat and responds with an internal reaction.

When the stress response is activated, our body goes on alert status; it’s like a 911 call. Since this response is our basic survival mechanism, when triggered, it overrides all systems of the body transforming and affecting rapid change in all the body’s major systems to provide quick energy to fight or flee.

When the stress response is activated:

- Adrenaline and cortisol, the stress hormones, flood our bloodstream
- Breathing becomes shallow
- Heart rate and blood pressure increase
- Muscles become tense and ready for action
- The immune system’s efficiency is suppressed
- **The sleep process is blocked**

The Stress and Sleep Connection

We know that the stress response can be triggered by our reactions to outside stressors, such as job problems, relationship difficulties, money worries and health concerns. It also can be activated by unpleasant memories experienced as a child or by other significant events, including death of a loved one, a serious illness or a divorce. Any or all of these situations can affect our sleep.

It is very frustrating when we cannot sleep. We try to clear our mind, relax and fall asleep, but we are unable to turn off disturbing thoughts and let go of the day’s events. We feel tired, we want to sleep, we try hard to sleep, but instead we toss and turn. Or, we may have fallen asleep, only to awaken in the night and cannot go back to sleep. We tell ourselves to relax but we can’t.

Why can’t we relax enough to sleep? Our frustration, worry and anxiety cause a heightened physiological reaction (stress response) known as hyperarousal, which upsets the balance between sleep and wakefulness. The result is we become

increasingly tense, anxious and wide-awake, instead of feeling calm, relaxed and sleepy.

Adapted from: Why Sleep? Your Guide to the Benefits of Sleep,
Chapter 8: "The Stress and Sleep Connection," Quanta Dynamics, Inc., 2003.

New Quanta Dynamics Products, Services and Specials

We have created a **What's New** section on our website's home page tool bar. Look there for new products and services each month. The following are currently listed in **What's New**.

1. Our newest podcast, "**Night Light:**" **Sleep Enhancing Music**. Its stimulating conversation with composers, Steve Fish and Bobby Brooks, describes how and why this sleep enhancement program was made.
2. "**Night Light**" is now available in disk format and sells for only \$9.95 on our website. It also is available in digital format through iTunes and other sites. To play it see our website home page for a direct link.
3. Our **Why Sleep?: Your Guide to the Benefits of Sleep** Book is specially priced at only **\$6.95** this holiday season. Consider buying it as a gift for family and friends. They will thank you!

Visit our website at
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"Your Sleep is Important to Us!"

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