



Get more sleep and practice Neuro-Attitudinal

Bởi:

Joe Tye

“If physical energy is the foundation of all dimensions of energy, sleep is the foundation of physical energy. No single behavior, we’ve come to believe, more fundamentally influences our effectiveness in waking life than sleep... Nevertheless, sleep is also one of the first behaviors many of us are willing to sacrifice, on the mistaken assumption that doing so will allow us to be more productive.”

Tony Schwartz (with Jean Gomes and Catherine McCarthy Ph.D.: *The Way We’re Working Isn’t Working: The Four Forgotten Needs that Energize Great Performance*)

If you listen to the blues or country western songs, you know that having your world turned upside down is associated with sleepless nights. This can create a real downward emotional spiral because, at a time when you most need to be positive, cheerful, and optimistic sleep deprivation causes you to be anxious, depressed, and pessimistic. Compounding the problem, chances are that you were already operating on too little sleep in the days before you got the pink slip, the divorce papers, the cancer diagnosis or whatever else it was that caused your world to flip upside down, so you entered the crisis with a serious sleep debt on which your payments were way behind.

Every mental capacity suffers when you are sleep-deprived and emotionally sleep deprivation is the equivalent of living under a grey cloud. All this is bad enough, but unfortunately the first mental capacity to disintegrate when you are sleep deprived happens to be the one you most need when your world has gone upside down: creativity (and its cousin curiosity). You can still do most of the things you’ve done before when you’re tired or exhausted, albeit not as well. Although it’s a dumb and dangerous thing to do, we’ve all driven a car along a familiar road when we could hardly stay awake.

The one time in your life it is most vital for you to ask new questions and to try new things is when what you have been doing is no longer working (if it ever really did). If you are cheating yourself on sleep you are unlikely to ask questions that yield new answers or to have the courage to take the actions that those new answers would lead you to take. As Vince Lombardi famously put it, fatigue makes cowards of us all.

There have been whole books written on the importance of sleep that have included chapters devoted to sleeping better (for example *Power Sleep* by James Maas) but here are a few of the basics: 1) limit your intake of caffeine and other stimulants especially later in the day; 2) have a regular time for going to bed, which is probably earlier than when you go to bed now; 3) limit alcohol consumption and don't eat heavy meals too close to bedtime; 4) keep your bedroom dark and quiet (Mindfold eyeshades, which you can get for about twelve bucks on Amazon.com, are a great way to darken a room while comforting your eyes); and 5) have a nice pre-bedtime ritual such as reading an inspirational book or scripture while sipping a cup of herbal tea.

Neuro-Attitudinal Positivity (N.A.P.)

Schwartz also speaks about what he calls “the undervalued power of naps” saying: “Perhaps no single daytime renewal behavior more reliably influences performance – and is less common in the workplace – than taking a nap.” But you already know that, don't you? You have no doubt experienced the rejuvenating power of taking a nap on a weekend afternoon. You also no doubt have a very clear mental picture of what would happen if your boss came into your work area and found you curled up on the floor with a “do not disturb” sign (one never hears “sleeping on the job” as a compliment!).

Some of history's most productive people were notorious nappers: Thomas Edison, Winston Churchill, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Napoleon Bonaparte among them. If you are unable to, as Churchill advised, to put on your PJs and hop in the sack for an afternoon nap, try the approach that artist Salvador Dali used. He would sit in a chair holding a heavy key or knife between two fingers directly above a pie pan placed upside down on the floor then close his eyes and let himself drift off to sleep. When he lost his grip on the key and it clanged onto the pie pan he went back to work, refreshed and ready to be creative. If you do this at work, you might also want to have some sort of early warning system that would cause you to drop the key anytime the boss approached.