

Balance

The art of sleep



In a quest for a **BETTER 2022**, balance is critical. In our first conversation around unpacking this theme, I am going to focus on the importance of **SLEEP!**



More and more, I am seeing that sleep is becoming less of a priority in our hectic lives, lived to fulfil our goals and driven to achieve our version of success. I have noted in the vast majority of my clients, that sleep is the first natural cycle to be compromised and forfeited, when the pressure is on.



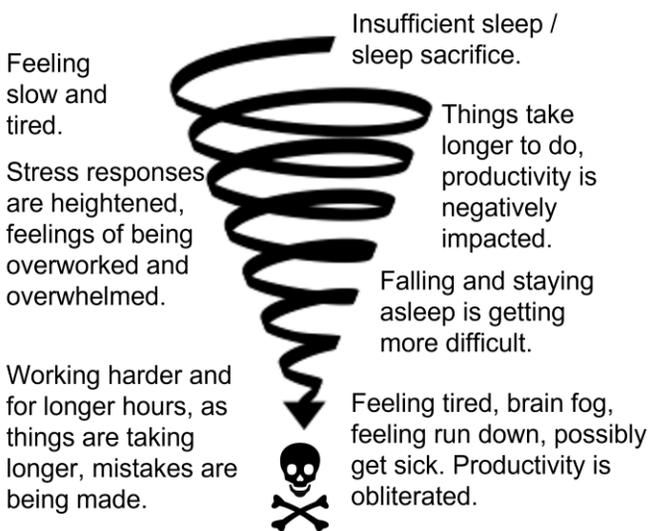
Through my years of observation and research, I am convinced that this pattern has become (in some people) a vicious, nonstop exhausting cycle. The impact of which is devastating. Devastating to our bodies, minds and yes, **productivity**.

I think the first question we need to ask is **WHY** do we sleep and why is sleep necessary?

All mammals sleep, this is a crucial time for our bodies and brains to heal, restore and ward off disease. An important aspect of sleeping is the opportunity for the brain to process information, according to what needs to be stored and if stored, in the short or long term memory banks (in the hippocampus).

Sleep is literally the time when brain takes out the 'garbage' (a word used in the Journal of Neuroscience) by pruning non-required neural links. It is also during this time of sleep that brain flushes out cellular detritus (waste or debris of any kind) built up during the day.

Listed next to this paragraph are the key effects of a lack of good sleep. Please read and then reread.



Sleep is impossible!

The devastating effects of a **lack of sleep**

- *Slowed thinking*
- *Reduced attention span*
- *Worsened memory*
- *Poor or risky decision-making*
- *Lack of energy*
- *Mood changes including feelings of **stress, anxiety, or irritability***

(Source: Sleep Foundation, June 2021)

Creating new habits, and resisting the temptation to sacrifice your sleep, is a crucial first step to creating better balance, for a **BETTER 2022**. The next time you decide to just push through and work until you are half past dead, remember, you are going to be less and less productive.

*It is really a **self-defeating thing to do!**
If in doubt, reread the list above!*

Now that we are on the same page, and accept and understand that sleep is a crucial part of our lives, the question remains:

HOW?

How can we maintain a healthy sleeping regime (also known as good sleep hygiene – not my favourite description)?

FIRST, UNDERSTAND HOW SLEEP WORKS

Here we look to our Circadian Rhythm. This is the rhythm our bodies follow during a 24 hour cycle. Hormones, neurotransmitters and brain chemicals, as well as body temperature and appetite are all influenced by where we are in the 24 hour revolution of the Circadian Rhythm. Directly related to sleep, humans are designed to be awake during daylight and sleep in the dark of the night.

Specific neurons (suprachiasmatic neurons) in the hypothalamus receive light from the eye indicating the need to be awake.

This stage of alertness is assisted by neurotransmitters such as Serotonin and Dopamine, until the light fades and Melatonin is released to induce sleep. Disruption to this biological rhythm is closely linked to a wide range of diseases (along with lifestyle) such as: obesity, type 2 diabetes, depression and even Cancer (Jandial, MD, Phd. NeuroFitness 2019). Not optimal to say the least!

Melatonin and cortisol are in an **opposite relationship**; when melatonin is high, cortisol should be low and vice versa. When either of these gets out of balance, our ability to sleep is affected.

It is simple: the more cortisol (stress hormone), the less Melatonin, the more difficult good sleep is to achieve.

Generations ago, when people woke up with the sun and went to bed near sunset, the sleeping schedule was regulated by natural light.

(thrivenfunctionalmedicine.com)



“Difficulty falling asleep and getting a quality sleep every night increases the risk of developing depression. Studies show that approximately 75 percent of people suffering from depression also endure symptoms of insomnia and sleep deprivation. Although insomnia is not considered to be a symptom of depression, people with insomnia are five times more likely to develop depression.”



HOW TO SLEEP BETTER

Unplug.

The light emitted from computer and TV screens disrupts your circadian rhythm and keeps you awake. Disruptions to your circadian rhythm are linked to vision problems, cancer, and depression.



Don't eat or drink late at night.

Caffeine, alcohol, and nicotine can also cause sleep disruptions.

Pick a bedtime.

Decide when you have to wake up, and go to bed eight hours before then. Consider setting a nightly alarm to remind yourself when to get ready for bed.



Never do any work in bed.

If you associate your bed with reading emails and dwelling on work-related issues, it will be harder to relax there.



Keep a journal.

Spending just a few minutes to reflect on the positive highlights of your day can transform your attitude and keep you motivated.

Meditate.

Just five minutes of breathing meditation will lower stress, relax your body, and quiet your mind.



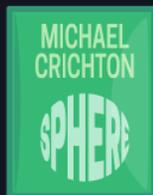
Make a to-do list.

Writing down tomorrow's priorities will clear your mind for the night.



Read a real book for enjoyment.

Make sure it's not work-related. This should relax you and spur your creativity and passion.



Create a hygiene ritual.

Repetition will send a psychological signal that you are getting ready for bed. Brush your teeth, wash your face, floss.



Sources: Matthew Toren/Entrepreneur, National Sleep Foundation.

BUSINESS INSIDER

Thank you Matthew Toren, Nation Sleep Foundation and Business Insider, I couldn't have said it better myself!

To discuss your own sleeping plan, contact Debbie on 083 987 2925 | Debbie@routescoaching.co.za | routescoaching.co.za