

Zzzzzzzzzzz. Zzzzzzzzzzz. Are you getting enough z's in your life? Frankly, the credit given to ample quality sleep is sometimes shorted. Face it, you think better, feel better and look better when you're well rested.

Unfortunately, I'm a procrastinator and there are certain things I put off for weeks. Then suddenly when I'm getting ready to go somewhere, I think I have to catch up on so many of those neglected projects before I can leave.

I don't know if it's a matter of an adrenalin rush that makes me pump up, but more times than not I get very few hours of sleep before I take off on a trip.

You'd think I'd learn that it's not extremely smart to start out a trip exhausted. I've reached the point of feeling nauseated because I am so tired and end up missing something in order to hit the hay.

There's no doubt about it that sleep deprivation can adversely affect brain function and there are numerous published medical studies to confirm that.

Aching muscles, dizziness and nausea, dry mouth, hallucinations, hand tremors, headaches, increased blood pressure, memory lapse or loss, obesity, slowed word recall and of course the obvious irritability and temper tantrums can be effects from not getting enough sleep.

I can't help but think of a young child or infant when they're suddenly cranky and hard to ration with. You need a nap is often times the named verdict and off to bed is the solution.

When you stop to think of work environments and adult situations when people are cranky and hard to ration with, doesn't it make you wonder if it's the same scenario? Does Grumpy Joe need a nap?

We often times overextend ourselves and take on more to do than the hours in a day allow. Or we're having so much fun and just don't know when to call it quits. So we put sleep on hold because it's just not as important. Or is it?

Unfortunately, I think sometimes we consider it a luxury and don't allow ourselves to indulge.

One study at Chicago Medical Institute suggested that sleep deprivation may be linked to more serious diseases such as heart disease and mental illnesses.

Other studies show that the lack of sleep affects growth hormones and the process of healing. An attempt at weight loss can be inhibited if the body isn't allowed proper rest.

Some people boast of their need for very little sleep and take pride in the fact that they function best without much. I'll have to say that some people really do seem to require less sleep than others.

Unfortunately, you hear of students turning to Speed or other drugs, which provide that miracle rush to give them more awake hours in a day. But it still comes down to paying for it eventually. I'd say avoid that mess and let sleep happen.

My husband has actually had his heart go out of rhythm because he pushed high doses of caffeine to stay awake on the road after packing far too much into a few days.

Could sleep really have avoided an emergency room visit? Statistics show far too many accidents caused by tired drivers. In fact, I saw the results of one study where the reaction time of a tired driver was worse than that of a drunk driver.

I recall a time in college when a clothing store was looking for temporary help to input inventory on the computer from midnight to 7 a.m. I enjoyed data entry and took on the endeavor.

I don't recall if I attempted to sleep before I went the first night since it wasn't that unusual to be up until midnight in college life. But I do remember getting home in time to get ready for a class and thinking I was going to get so much done that day.

I eventually ended up rather brain dead until I realized I did indeed have to factor in sleep time, no matter what continued to happen in the dorm life around me.

Sleep deprivation has been used as a form of torture when subjects are forced to stay awake for days. When finally allowed to fall asleep, suddenly they're awakened and questioned.

An Israeli prime minister who was held prisoner in Russia described such torture when a haze began to form, his spirit was wearied and his legs were unsteady. He had one sole desire: to sleep. It is said that anyone who has experienced this desire knows that not

even hunger or thirst compare with it.

Well, midnight approaches as I write this. Maybe I'd better practice what I preach. Nighty night!!