



The Relationship Between Sleep and Success

BY RICK TIEDEMANN

I often hear business leaders say that they are too busy to sleep or that they will sleep when they are dead. The sad reality is that their “I’ll sleep when I’m dead” comment may actually come true sooner than they want, because they are not prioritizing sleep. The data clearly shows that those who experience sub-optimal sleep for an extended period of time are at a greater risk for heart attacks, strokes, cancer and all causes of mortality.

Once we appreciate the fact that sleep is the “ultimate high-performance drug,” and the number one health prevention behaviour we can embrace, we can start to consciously modify our behaviours so we routinely enjoy reparative, restorative and performance enhancing sleep. When we sleep, our immune system recharges, our brain is cleansed of metabolic materials that can negatively impact on our cognition, our bones, muscles and blood vessels repair themselves, our experiences from the previous day are consolidated and our mood is rebalanced. All of these health benefits are essential if we, as business leaders, want to perform at our best on a sustained basis.

While there are a few medical reasons why people suffer from fragmented sleep, many of the causes are actually behavioral, and therefore, we can get our sleep back if we want to. Some of the top sleep disruptors are alcohol, caffeine and technology. If you currently sleep like a champ (7.5+ hours of undisturbed sleep each night) you are golden, however if this is not your reality you should consider making changes. The magnitude of the change will be based on how fragmented your sleep is. Here are a few choices that I have made to help me to enjoy the best possible sleep.

1. No alcohol Sunday night through Thursday night as alcohol is a sedative and disrupts our deep sleep and causes us to experience restless sleep. Let’s be clear, that I am not saying no to alcohol, but rather I am saying yes to a healthier, higher performing version of Rick.

2. While I don’t drink coffee, many of you may want to cut or at least reduce your consumption of caffeine-based products as caffeine can cause suppression of the sleep hormone melatonin.

3. In terms of technology use (phones, computers, televisions, etc.) I turn these devices off around 8:00 pm. The blue light from these devices suppresses our melatonin and the content can be stimulating, annoying or downright aggravating. Getting ourselves jacked up after 8:00 pm does not lend itself well to good sleep. We want our bodies to go into a calming mode 1-1.5 hours before we want to be asleep so that we can fall asleep and stay asleep.

As business leaders, we all want to be successful on many dimensions. As I have shared with you in past articles, creating abundance for ourselves, which includes optimizing our health, is hopefully one of your key benchmarks for success. Without good health the rest doesn’t really matter, and in order to enjoy optimal health, you need to prioritize your sleep. Napoleon once said, “Let him sleep... for when he wakes, he will move mountains.”

A good night will lead to a great day.

I wish you all, the best of health. **B**