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Personalized Stress Management

Have a Better Bedtime: How to Make Sleep a Non-Negotiable

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By Jan Bruce

In honor of Stress Awareness Month, we've made it our goal to strengthen your resilience ("do this") and hold the line against stress ("ditch that"). This week, we turn your attention to your sleep, a non-negotiable for healthy stress management.

Non-Negotiable: Sleep

Let's face it: When you're exhausted, you have zero capacity to manage stress. Sleep is pivotal for stamina, health, mental focus, and emotional regulation. Just think about how hard it is to stay calm and collected after a night of no sleep -- everything feels a whole lot worse than it really is. Fact is, sleep is the ultimate stress-buster; it primes your body to be ready to cope with whatever comes your way, and none of us can afford not to have that.

Do This!

Make simple shifts in your evening habits

It's important to make sleeping smart a priority, and that means sleeping better and longer. Do that and we believe everything in your life will flow more smoothly. Luckily, your bedtime habits and lifestyle choices make an enormous difference in how well you snooze -- so even small shifts can have big payoffs. For instance, you can improve your sleep when you:

Set a regular bedtime. It seems too easy but it works like a charm, and that's because routine tells your body when you should be asleep and when you should be awake. Going to bed and waking up around the same time every day will keep your biological clock steady so you can settle down quicker and rise easier. So do yourself a favor and fight the urge to keep your laptop open when it's getting late; chances are, whatever you're doing can wait until the morning.

Give yourself a half hour to ready yourself for sleep. It's crucial to allow your body to come down from the day before your head hits the pillow. Don't be surprised if insomnia strikes when you don't; it's natural for your body to need to unwind before nodding off. Consider taking a warm bath to relax your muscles, listening to soothing music, or doing some gentle stretches. Whatever relaxes you and disconnects you from the day -- and your devices -- will do the trick.

(Read more on how to build better bedtime habits.)

Ditch That!

Stop making these cardinal sleep mistakes

Forty-five percent of Americans say that they suffer from poor or insufficient sleep, [according to the National Sleep Foundation](#) -- so clearly something is getting in the way of good rest for many of us, even when we're well-intentioned. You know that sleep is the bedrock of stress management and emotional balance -- but you may be unknowingly, or knowingly, making choices that sabotage your slumber. Take a moment and re-examine whether you:

Don't exercise too close to bedtime. Any workouts that get your heart rate up should be avoided at night, because they run the risk of getting you too keyed up to settle down. In the evenings, try a gentle yoga routine instead.

Question old beliefs about sleep. If you notice it's consistently a challenge for you to power down, re-examine your thoughts: Do you believe that successful people don't need a lot of sleep, for example, or that sleep is an expendable resource? We at meQuilibrium call these iceberg beliefs -- they sit just below your awareness and get in the way without your even realizing it. Remember: Sleep restores your energy so that you're able to do all the things that allow you to thrive. And even if you put all the other stress buffers in place -- good nutrition, quality friendships -- you're negating your efforts when you compromise good sleep.

(Read more on how to [keep iceberg beliefs from causing hidden stress.](#))

Learn more useful information about stress and your health! Order meQuilibrium's new book, [meQuilibrium: 14 Days to Cooler, Calmer, and Happier](#), co-authored by meQuilibrium CEO Jan Bruce, Adam Perlman, M.D., Chief Medical Officer, and Andrew Shatté, Ph.D., Chief Science Officer.

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