

Sleep is Essential to “Feeling Better” and Being Better

- **Today’s #1 Concept: The first step is to understand the importance of sleep.** Sleep simply is the single most important health and well-being activity you can engage in. We will drill down on all the reasons and the studies that prove this in a subsequent post. By that time, you will have convinced yourself if you follow these simple strategies below.
- “Adequate Sleep” = Sleep time of 7-8 hours + the “Quality” of sleep during those 7-8 hours. The items you do during the day and in the evening prior to sleep directly affect the quality of how you sleep which will result in feeling better, our goal. More on quality later.
- **Today’s #1 Task: Give yourself a “lights out” and stick to it:** Believe it or not, we do better as “creatures of habit.” Regular wake, eat and sleep times create a trust between your body and brain. Routine allows the brain to relax in to knowing that the essentials will be covered and decreases the stress of having to adjust the system on a dime.
 - **Determine what time you need to awaken in the morning**
 - Subtract 8 hours from that time: Ex.: Awaken at 6 am – 8 hours = Lights out at 10 pm.
 - Bedtime = 30 min prior to lights out. Ex: Lights out at 10 pm: In bed for chill down, relax, relate at 9:30 pm.
 - Path to bedtime begins 15 min prior to bedtime, i.e., 9:15 pm, to take care of face, teeth, personal needs. (You can start with bedtime 20 min. prior to lights out and 10 min. for personal needs, but migrate to 30 and 15 minutes eventually.)
- Look forward to this calming pre-sleep routine during the day knowing you have a plan for good sleep (aka “recovery”).
- **Hugely Important:** Discuss plan and reasons with your sleep partner in a calm environment to minimize a reactive response to this rather profound change. Your goal: Buy-in from your sleep partner. Here are your talking points:
 - Adequate sleep is critical to limiting stress and improving your (and their) quality of life.
 - This discussion is as important as an upcoming surgical or medical procedure would be.
 - You will need support to achieve your goal and need to kindly ask your bed partner for that support.
 - Adequate Sleep is FREE and 17,000 studies have shown it results in enjoyment of:
 - A more enjoyable life
 - Less stress
 - Better relationships
 - Better job
 - Better memory

- Dozens of other positive benefits soon to be discussed.
- If you have to adjust your new lights out and bedtime more than an hour, start with thirty-minute changes.
 - Ex.: Current lights out time is 11:30 pm and target lights out is 10:00 pm.
 - Set lights out at 11:00 pm for two nights, then 10:30 pm for two night, then 10:00 pm.
- Work arounds for the new schedule are not that difficult, especially for the value adequate sleep will bring.
 - Record the late show and view early the next evening.
 - Eliminate some forgettable TV show all together. Your health is more important.
 - Prioritize sleep over other activities including Facebook, news, sports, etc.
 - You will be amazed.