

Article: Off to College, Probably Not Off to Sleep: Part 1

By Dr. Michael J. Breus, PhD posted on Huffin

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The dog days of summer are fast coming to a close. In the coming weeks, millions of college-bound students will be hitting the books again and adjusting back into university life. For first timers, this is an exciting time period. For veteran upper classmen, it's also a thrilling time to know that you're close to being fully independent and out in the "real" world on your own.

But for both newbies and soon-to-be graduates alike, the one thing that seems to get the best of them every single year is sleep. It's not hard to get that "A" in *not enough sleep*. Translation: serious deprivation.

Okay, so I'll admit, it comes with the territory. College life is, well, college! A rite of passage, and we all have our top secret stories from then. The two biggest culprits of a sleepless college student:

- Academics and late-night studying.
- "Social" studies and late-night partying.

You can't necessarily forgo either of the above on a consistent basis. But your body wants sleep on a consistent basis, which can conflict with the trappings of a successful and fun college life. And, without mom or dad around to nag about bedtime (and, might I add, wake time in order to be in class on time), the transition back to school life with all its demands and nocturnal distractions can be difficult.

So let me offer some realistic solutions that can ease any college student back into the swing of things quickly and restfully:

- **Time management:** this is a no brainer, albeit hard to do well. When homework, the social calendar, and sleep all call for attention, which goes first? How can you maximize all three?
- **Set clear boundaries.** Tell yourself you won't party past a certain time; keep to a regular sleep-wake schedule as best you can, even on the weekend. Don't use the 24-hour library. Keep a routine study session daily, say from 4 to 7 at night, and don't let social distractions get in the way that will later have you back in the books past midnight.
- **Turn off your cell phone** after a certain hour, say 10 pm.
- Establish coping skills and **stress-reduction practices.** College comes with an enormous set of stresses and challenges. Strategies to help balance your stress will

have a huge impact in your ability to get things done, and yes, get a good night's sleep.

- Don't forget to **exercise**. The freshmen 15 isn't just related to a higher intake of (usually buffet-style) food; most college students forgo regular exercise *and* sleep--the double whammy for packing on the pounds.
- Enlist a **support buddy** to keep you on track. Having someone who can watch out for you and let you know when it's time to re-think your habits can be a lifesaver. And doing the same for them reaps benefits for you.
- Become a **pro napper**. Napping can be difficult to pull off in the corporate world. But there's ample time to nod off in the afternoon library (just don't be caught doing it in class). It's exercise for the brain, after all.

College students get free passes for keeping their computers in their dorm rooms, but watch out for those bright screensavers. Before you put yourself to bed, put your computer to sleep.

In part II, I'll share my ideas for the ultimate dorm room makeover. It's a little different than refiguring your bedroom back home. Even in an itty bitty room the size of a closet or bathroom, you can create a sanctuary for sleep. And yes, even study.

Sweet Dreams,

Michael J. Breus, PhD
The Sleep Doctor™

This article on college students and sleep is also available at Dr. Breus's official blog, The Insomnia Blog.

Follow Dr. Michael J. Breus on Twitter: www.twitter.com/thesleepdoctor

Biography of Dr. Michael J. Breus, PhD

Dr. Michael J. Breus, PhD, is a Clinical Psychologist and a Diplomate of the American Board of Sleep Medicine. He was one of the youngest people to have passed the Board at age 31 and, with a specialty in Sleep Disorders and Neuropsychological Testing, is one of only 159 doctors in the world with his credentials and distinction. He is the co-founder of SoundSleep Solutions, a direct-to-consumer, sleep-related information Web site, and currently serves as Chairman of the Clinical Advisory Board for Sleep Holdings, inc., the only publicly traded sleep diagnostic and therapy company in the world (SLHJ.PK). His first book, *Good Night: The Sleep Doctor's 4-Week Program to Better Sleep and Better Health* (Dutton/Penguin, 2006), has been met with rave reviews and continues to change the lives of readers.

Article: 10 Natural Sleep Tips by Christine Fee

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We all want it. We all need it. But sleep can be hard to get--especially these days when high stress runs amok and there are more To Dos at the end of our day than time. No wonder the sleep-aid industry is so colossal. Despite the recession, prescriptions for major sleeping-pill brands rose 7% last year, and by next year, the pharmaceutical industry is predicted to reap at least \$5 billion from annual sales of so-called hypnotics to help people sleep. Americans are an increasingly sleepless people; millions have trouble falling asleep, and many millions more have trouble staying asleep, especially women. The National Institute of Health says more than 70 million of us nationwide may be affected by sleep troubles.

Sleep is the foundation and the most crucial component of overall good health. As a personal trainer and fitness instructor, I have had the privilege of helping people improve their lifestyle and get into shape with exercise, attention to diet, and having fun. In recent years, however, I have watched many clients--women especially--struggle with optimizing their health and wellness despite our efforts in these three areas. I have long believed that sleep plays a vital role in the maintenance of a strong, vibrant body, and realized while I was giving my clients overall wellness, I wasn't addressing the fourth and extremely important dimension of health: sleep.

Sleep studies have proven that people who get less than four hours of sleep a night gain weight. Without proper sleep, the balance of the digestive hormones leptin and ghrelin is disturbed which causes an increase in overall appetite, increased hunger and a craving for calorie dense, high carb foods such as sweets and salty snacks.

This is then compounded by a loss of energy and interest in exercising. The vicious cycle continues since lack of vigorous exercise leads to poor sleep quality. Without deep sleep your appearance will deteriorate in other ways (hello fine lines and dark under eye circles), your productivity level will decrease, and your sex drive will decline. You will be at risk for heart disease, diabetes, stroke and depression.

Many people turn to sleep medications instead of making behavioral changes. Sleep medications, even when approved and prescribed by a doctor are not meant to be taken more than four out of seven nights a week. Many individuals develop a dependency on pills, whether physical or psychological.

That is the bad news. The good news is...you don't have to lose sleep over it! You CAN improve your "sleep hygiene." Better sleep hygiene leads to better sleep. Better sleep paves the way for weight loss, a more youthful appearance, renewed energy and even a better sex life!

The 10 tips below are ALL NATURAL and require SIMPLE behavioral changes that anyone can do

1. Reduce Caffeine- Caffeine stays in your system for up to 12 hours, so if you like to go to bed at 10pm, have your cup of java before 10am.
2. Do NOT consume alcohol or nicotine before bed- Alcohol will put you to sleep, but wake you up several hours later after the alcohol has metabolized in your system.
3. Always finish vigorous exercise 5 hours before bed. Exercise raises your core body temperature. It takes up to five hours for the temperature to drop in order to fall asleep.
4. Avoid heavy meals before bedtime. Heavy meals may cause heartburn and other digestive issues interfering with a good night's sleep.
5. Keep fluids to a minimum after 8PM. This prevents waking up in the middle of the night to go to the bathroom.
6. Avoid stress inducing activity prior to sleep- e.g. emails, voicemails, paying the bills or stress inducing television programs such as the news, etc.
7. Establish a bedtime routine- separate yourself from the activities of the day to allow your mind and body to prepare for sleep. A secure bedtime routine like you may have had as a child is conducive to sleep.
8. Write it down- Put worries, fears, and tomorrow's "To Do" list on paper and out of your head. Keep a notebook by your bed in case you wake up in the middle of the night with things on your mind.
9. Create a restful environment in your bedroom- keep your room cool, dark, quiet and clutter-free (no laptops, blackberries, cell phones, etc). If noise is an issue, use a "white" noise maker.
10. Utilize Relaxation techniques- light stretching, soothing music, aromatherapy oil, deep breathing, guided imagery, meditation. You can do any one or better yet a combination of these activities to release the stress of the day, relax your mind and prepare your body for sleep. Sleep experts highly recommend these stress relieving techniques because they work and because anyone can do them.

In addition to the above must do tips, other sleep aiding activities include: taking a warm bath before bed, investing in a good mattress and pillow, cozy pajamas, and luxurious sheets.

Give it a try! You owe it to yourself; you have nothing to lose, but pounds and wrinkles!

Sweet Dreams.

For information on my all inclusive Sleep Kit, Good Night Sleep Right™ please visit www.christinefeewellness.com.

Biography of Christine Fee

Celebrated lifestyle expert Christine Fee is a consummate wellness professional with more than 25 years' experience in the fitness industry. She is also an educator, lifestyle coach, and founder of her own company (Christine Fee Wellness, LLC), which provides premium natural products and cutting-edge services to address the top wellness issues of today. Her latest crusade entails educating people about the benefits of restful sleep and helping individuals achieve high-quality sleep through her revolutionary Good Night, Sleep Right audio and video program.

Dedicated to helping people feel good about themselves, Christine has dedicated her life to inspiring and improving the health and wellbeing of others. Noted for her down-to-earth personality and unflagging charisma, Christine boats an impressive history that makes her uniquely qualified to champion the health market. Armed with a Masters in Education, she started out as an elementary school teacher and soon found herself leading classes as an aerobics instructor as well. Her broad dance and choreography background suited her perfectly. "It was incredibly fun and energizing, bringing back a part of my youth that had slipped away taking care of three small children," she says.

Her permanent movement into the fitness industry rapidly expanded as Christine earned advanced certifications with the American Council on Exercise, and eventually became a Master Member of the prestigious IDEA Health and Fitness Association. Her reputation as an expert in Pilates, dance training, aerobics, and weight training also grew quickly. She soon attracted a wide and varied client list as a personal trainer, including celebrities like Susan Lucci, Cameron Mathison, and Carol Alt. Guthy Renker hired her to be the Pilates consultant for its Malibu Pilates infomercial product. She became an honoree for the Diabetes Research Institute Gala Fund Raiser.

Christine's latest focus on sleep began when a client commented: "If I could bottle your voice and take it home with me, I would fall right to sleep." It occurred to Christine that so many people have sleep issues that detract from their otherwise healthy lifestyles. She then set out to develop a product anyone could use to enhance sleep and accelerate results in every area of life. Good Night, Sleep Right launched in 2009 and has been well received.

In addition to the gamut of physical activities that are part of her business, Christine also enjoys reading, decorating, entertaining, and traveling. She's been married to Kevin for 36 years, and they have three grown children. Christine lives on Long Island, New York.