Zzzz’s – Catch some!

(Excerpted from Stress Less in 27 Days, by Julie Christiansen, “The Anger Lady”
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Sleep these days seems to be overrated. Do you remember that famous sitcom episode in which a member of the ensemble cast decides he can get so much more done if he only takes a few short naps throughout the day rather than sleeping a full night? As it always happens in sitcoms, chaos ensues. The character finally succumbs to exhaustion in the middle of a make-out session with his girlfriend, who assumes he has died, and when he wakes up, he on his way down to the bottom of the Hudson River, rolled up in a carpet! It is a hilarious commentary on the dangers of sleep deprivation, and though humourous, it isn’t too far off the mark.

“If a man had as many ideas during the day as he does when he has insomnia, he'd make a fortune.”
Griff Niblack

According to the website, www.sleep-deprivation.com, sleep deprivation can have serious effects on one’s health in the form of physical and mental impairments. Inadequate rest can impair your ability to think, to handle stress, to maintain a healthy immune system and to control and appropriately express your emotions. In fact, sleep is so important to our overall health that total sleep deprivation has been proven to be fatal: according to this site, lab rats that are denied the chance to rest die within two to three weeks.

Without adequate rest, the brain’s ability to function will deteriorate rapidly. The brain will work harder to counteract the effects of sleep deprivation effects, but will operate less effectively: concentration levels drop, and memory becomes impaired.

Under the effects of sleep deprivation, the brain begins to lose its ability to problem solve, make decisions, or to perform acts of simple logic. In other words, without sufficient sleep, you will not be able to do simple math like 8x7... what's that? Insufficient rest can also cause people to have hallucinations, slower reaction times, slurred speech, tremors, irritability, and driver fatigue. Other typical effects of sleep deprivation include depression, heart disease, and hypertension.

While North Americans enjoy the benefits of sufficient sleep, studies have shown that as many as 47 million adults may be putting themselves at risk for injury, health and behavior problems because they aren’t meeting their minimum sleep need in order to be fully alert the next day.
Sleep deprivation causes dangers such as drowsy driving, stress, anger and road rage. But beyond all of this, sleep deprivation can adversely affect all areas of your physical and mental health.

People who suffer from sleep deprivation due to sleep disorders—sleep apnea, narcolepsy, insomnia, etc.—may also suffer from other problems including diabetes, asthma, diabetes, cancer, illnesses that thrive on a weak immune system, or a second sleep disorder.

Sleep deprivation also contributes to stress and, again, stress weakens our immune system. So a sleep deprived, stressed individual will experience a double whammy effect on his/her ability to fight off illness and disease. To add insult to injury, sleep deprivation and stress, can upset your mental processes. You may experience confusion, memory loss, irritability or emotional highs and lows. If you already have a mental health disorder, sleep deprivation only adds to the problem.

Sleep deprivation is not just an issue for the young to middle-aged working class that is consumed by Hurry Sickness – madly rushing to and fro, trying to make ends meet. Many elderly people also suffer from insomnia and other sleep disorders. For the elderly, sleep deprivation can prove to be even more dangerous. Sleepy people are less focused on what they are doing or where they are going. Disorientation could lead to falls or getting lost in a neighborhood that is unfamiliar. Add to this the other problems that may be found in the elderly such as Alzheimer’s, dementia, or memory loss, and sleep deprivation presents a serious issue.

What can we do then, if we want to stay healthy? Start by getting the sleep you need. It may require you to change your lifestyle by altering your schedule, cutting activities, or making changes to your sleep habits. If you suspect you may have a sleep disorder, or you already know for certain that you do, talk to your doctor and ask about a sleep study.

While there is some disagreement about just how much sleep we really need, most experts agree that a night of seven to nine hours of restful, uninterrupted sleep is a good estimate for what we need, especially during times of high stress and anxiety.

**Here are some general guidelines to help you fall asleep and stay asleep:**

1. Spend your last hour before bed collecting and organizing your thoughts. Write in your journal or at the very least, make a list of the things that you need to do tomorrow – tell yourself you are clearing your mind so that you can rest without worrying about what will happen tomorrow.

2. Maintain a ritual to prepare yourself mentally for bed (e.g. washing face, brushing teeth, locking doors, etc.).

3. Limit your caffeine, nicotine and alcohol consumption. Do this throughout the day, and be sure not to consume too much of these substances at night.
4. Exercise vigorously each day. Do some gentle stretching before bed.

5. Listen to relaxation tapes.

6. Save your bed for when you are tired. When you feel sleep coming on, go to bed – don’t try to hold off, or decide then that it’s time to brush your teeth.

7. Do deep, slow, rhythmic breathing. Breathe slowly as if you were asleep.

8. Stop watching or listening to news programs at least an hour before trying to go to sleep. Don’t expect to fall asleep immediately after hearing or watching disturbing news. In fact, you should leave all the bad news from television or radio in the living room or den and keep it out of the bedroom.

9. Create a sleep-promoting environment that is quiet, dark, cool and comfortable.

10. Get professional help. If sleeplessness is becoming a problem for you, talk to your family doctor. S/he may be able to prescribe natural or medical assistance that can help you fall asleep without feeling hung over the following day.

As one who has witnessed first hand the extreme ill-effects of sleep deprivation, I urge you to take this aspect of your stress management plan very seriously. It’s funny when it is portrayed in a sitcom, but not so amusing when played out in real life. Think of the “accidents” that could have been avoided, the lives that could have been saved, and the millions of dollars that would not have been paid out in lawsuit settlements if over the years, people were fully rested, and alert when driving, operating dangerous machinery, or making important decisions.

Think about your own sleep patterns and check out the vast array of resources we have available to help us determine if we are engaged in healthy or unhealthy sleep habits. Learn what you need to do in order to get a good night’s sleep, and then act on it. Your brain, your stress response, your body, and your immune system will be eternally grateful.

To Order Your Autographed Copy of Stress Less in 27 Days
http://www.angersolution.com/products.php
About Julie Christiansen

An internationally recognized speaker, and author of several books, Julie Christiansen (The Anger Lady) brings over 15 years experience in group and individual counseling, to your boardroom. Branded as “Oprah for the Office” by some of her clients, Julie educates and entertains audiences throughout Canada, and the United States, and the Caribbean. While she has been compared to the likes of Brian Tracy and Jack Canfield, Julie has an energetic, humorous, and insightful style that is all her own. Julie has successfully merged her previous career as a counselor with her passion for helping teams attain peak performance and productivity through enhanced communication models. Her aim is to help her clients to attain optimized workplace effectiveness, with a focus on team development, communication, anger and stress management. Julie also trains counsellors and human services workers to apply the Anger Solutions™ Model of anger resolution counselling to their particular client groups through one-day trainings and the Train the Trainer™ program. She is a sought after guest expert for television and radio as well as print publications.

BODA reLEAF consulting

BODA: (noun) Old English – messenger
reLEAF: (v) Play on Words – to change

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Booking Information

Julie is available to deliver workshops, training seminars, or keynote addresses to your organization or at your next event.

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