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THE next time you tell yourself that you'll sleep when you're dead, realise that you're making a decision that can make that day come much sooner. Pushing late into the night is a health and productivity killer.

According to the Division of Sleep Medicine at the Harvard Medical School, the short-term productivity gains from skipping sleep to work are quickly washed away by the detrimental effects of sleep deprivation on your mood, ability to focus, and access to higher-level brain functions for days to come.

The negative effects of sleep deprivation are so great that people who are drunk outperform those lacking sleep.

WHY YOU NEED ADEQUATE SLEEP TO PERFORM

We've always known that sleep is good for your brain, but new research from the University of Rochester provides the first direct evidence for why your brain cells need you to sleep (and sleep the right way — more on that later).

The study found that when you sleep, your brain removes toxic proteins from its neurons that are by-products of neural activity when you're awake. Unfortunately, your brain can remove them adequately only while you're asleep.

So when you don't get enough sleep, the toxic proteins remain in your brain cells, wreaking havoc by impairing your ability to think — something no amount of caffeine can fix.

Skipping sleep impairs your brain function across the board. It slows your ability to process information and problem solve, kills your creativity, and catapults your stress levels and emotional reactivity.

SLEEP DEPRIVATION

DESTROYING BOTH YOU AND YOUR CAREER (PART 1)



WHAT SLEEP DEPRIVATION DOES TO YOUR HEALTH

Sleep deprivation is linked to a variety of serious health problems, including heart attack, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and obesity. It stresses you out because your body overproduces the stress hormone cortisol when it's sleep deprived.

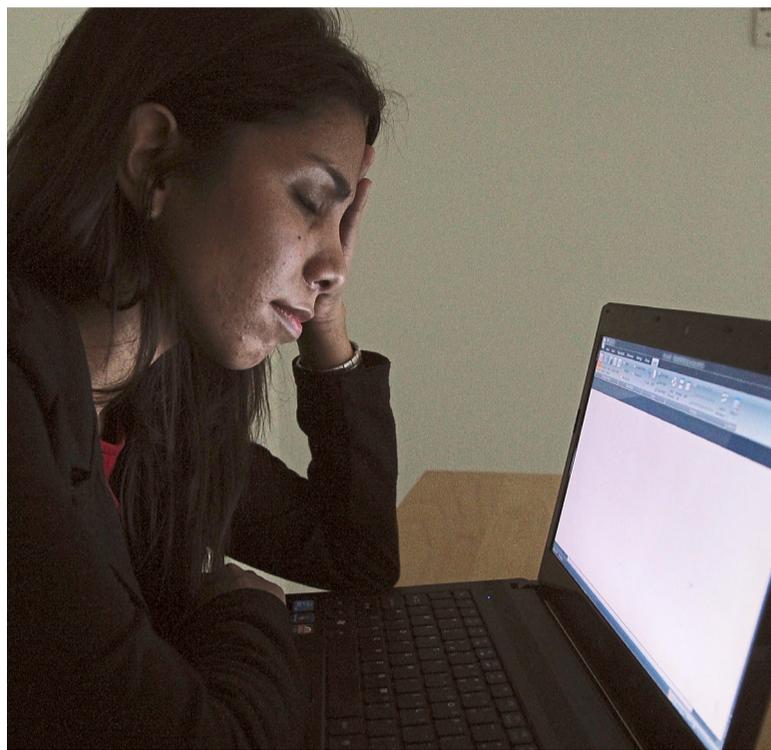
While excess cortisol has a host of negative health effects that come from the havoc it wreaks on your immune system, it also makes you look older, because cortisol breaks down skin collagen, the protein that keeps skin smooth and elastic.

In men specifically, not sleeping enough reduces testosterone levels and lowers sperm count.

Too many studies to list have shown that people who get enough sleep live longer, healthier lives, but I understand that sometimes this isn't motivation enough.

So consider this — not sleeping enough makes you fat. Sleep deprivation compromises your body's ability to metabolise carbohydrates and control food intake. When you sleep less you eat more and have more difficulty burning the calories you consume.

Sleep deprivation makes you hungrier by increasing the appetite-stimulating hormone ghrelin and makes it harder for you to get full by reducing levels of the satiety-inducing hormone leptin.



People who sleep less than six hours a night are 30% more likely to become obese than those who sleep seven to nine hours a night.

HOW MUCH SLEEP IS ENOUGH?

Most people need seven to nine hours of sleep a night to feel sufficiently rested. Few people are at their best with less than seven hours, and few require more than nine without an underlying health condition.

And that's a major problem, since more than half of Americans get less

than the necessary seven hours of sleep each night, according to the National Sleep Foundation.

FOR GO-GETTERS, IT'S EVEN WORSE

A recent survey of Inc. 500 CEOs found that half of them are sleeping less than six hours a night. And the problem doesn't stop at the top. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a third of US workers get less than six hours of sleep each night, and sleep deprivation costs US businesses

more than US\$63bil annually in lost productivity.

DOING SOMETHING ABOUT IT

Beyond the obvious sleep benefits of thinking clearly and staying healthy, the ability to manage your emotions and remain calm under pressure has a direct link to your performance.

TalentSmart has conducted research with more than a million people, and we've found that 90% of top performers are high in emotional intelligence (EQ). These individuals are skilled at understanding and using emotions to their benefit, and good sleep hygiene is one of the greatest tools at their disposal.

High-EQ individuals know it's not just how much you sleep that matters, but also how you sleep. When life gets in the way of getting the amount of sleep you need, it's absolutely essential that you increase the quality of your sleep through good sleep hygiene. There are many hidden killers of quality sleep.

EDITOR'S NOTE

In part 2 of this article, Dr Bradberry shares the 10 strategies that can help us identify the hidden killers of quality sleep. Stay tuned!

■ Dr Travis Bradberry is the award-winning co-author of the No.1 bestselling book, *Emotional Intelligence 2.0*, and the cofounder of TalentSmart, the world's leading provider of emotional intelligence tests and training, serving more than 75% of Fortune 500 companies. His bestselling books have been translated into 25 languages and are available in more than 150 countries. Dr. Bradberry has written for, or been covered by, *Newsweek*, *BusinessWeek*, *Fortune*, *Forbes*, *Fast Company*, *Inc.*, *USA Today*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Harvard Business Review*.

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■ Time and motion = Time and energy. Always set aside the time to condition your body and mind for peak performance.

Invest in fitness and you will find that you can push your energies a bit further every time it's called for. You cannot be the dynamic leader you want to be if your body is not willing.

■ Manage your exercise like a task! Invest at least two hours a week in cardiovascular exercises. Set appointments with your workout tasks on your calendar.

Two hours can be broken down into four 30-minute sessions. Keep this as a discipline and you will soon realise that you are exercising most days of the week. That in itself is an accomplishment!

■ Find some exercise hacks. Make it convenient enough so that you don't have an excuse.

- Buy a pair of running shoes and pack them along whenever you travel. Running is a great way to see a new place.

- Pack a ready gym bag in the car so you're always ready to go when your schedule opens up a window to hit the company gym.

- Learn the "7-minute workout" so you can work out in your hotel room.



■ Acquire a health baseline. Visit your health professional and get an accurate assessment of your health and fitness. Finding the "need" to correct matters could start you off on the right path with the right priorities.

Investing in yourself yields enormous returns on actual work output and effectiveness. You will find that with exercise, you will have more energy for increasing demands across

all areas of life.

Being in touch with your body also means you have the ability to listen to what it is saying, whether or not it could push itself or ask you to slow down and recover. Time may be inflexible but with exercise, you can feel that energy could be elastic.

Looking fit and healthy can also give you a boost in your career. A leader who knows how to manage himself/herself and his/her energy across a wide range of demands is "fit to lead".

If your outward appearance seems

like it could take an extra assignment, so shall these opportunities open up to you.

You will always be that person who looks fit for the job. In a study published by *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* "New evidence suggests that healthy-looking individuals are perceived as better leaders, even over intelligent-looking people."

So, if you are looking to increase your executive/leadership clout, you might as well start with yourself! Be fit to lead!

The familiar paradigms of the old

school need to be redefined in the modern age though they both point to the same thing: "Commitment".

As my dad would say, "You need to have your hands bleed practising, in order for you to be exceptional". But I would like to redefine blood, sweat and tears along the following directions:

- **Blood:** Commitment, trust, loyalty with the ones you lead and those who matter. Be willing to give yourself to them.

- **Sweat:** Giving yourself 100% to every task, in everything that you do. Strive for excellence and exceptional results.

- **Tears:** Connect with those that matter. Engage them even at an emotional level. Everything is personal. "Business is personal".

My dad is up there saying: "See I told you so!"

But Dad! It's more than just you saying it; experience and science say so as well.

■ John Walter Baybay is a regional management consultant who has worked more than 17 years in the areas of corporate strategic planning and economic planning. He is a competitive athlete who balances his time between business coaching, family and working with communities. To connect with him, email editor@leaderonomics.com. For more leadership insights, visit www.leaderonomics.com