

BETTER SLEEP

HOW TO GET BETTER SLEEP FOR BETTER HEALTH & PERFORMANCE



UNDERSTANDING YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM

Our autonomic nervous system is a highly intelligent part of our nervous system designed to provide unconscious and automatic control of many important functions in our body. The two complementary parts of the autonomic nervous system are the SYMPATHETIC and PARASYMPATHETIC nervous systems.

In modern society, most of us have **TOO MUCH SYMPATHETIC** and **NOT ENOUGH PARASYMPATHETIC** activity. This affects our immune system and our health.

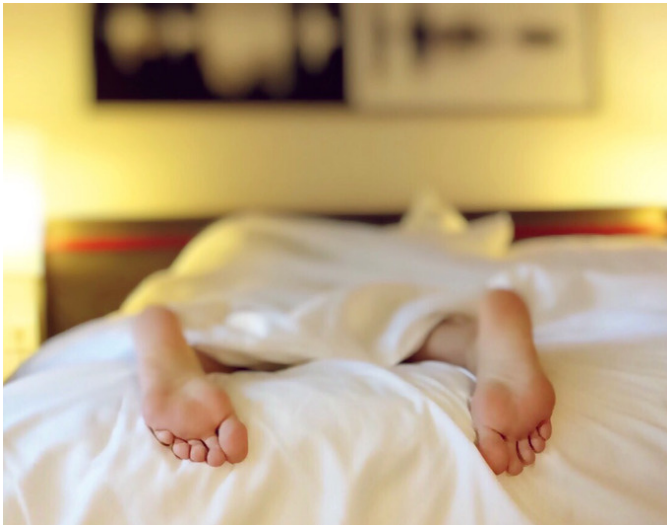


SYMPATHETIC & PARASYMPATHETIC

Your **SYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM** is responsible to activating the "FIGHT, FLIGHT or FREEZE" response to keep you alive when there's a danger. You experience increased heart rate, blood pressure and sweating. It can also be activated with psychological stress, which is not a threat to our lives but our body still responds as if it were.

Your **PARASYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM** is responsible for the "REST, DIGEST, REPAIR" response which allows us to relax, sleep, recover and heal. You experience a lowered heart rate and blood pressure and increased blood flow to your organs.

For optimal health & performance, we need to ensure we are balancing out the sympathetic activity with parasympathetic activity, including good quality and quantity sleep.



HOW TO GET BETTER SLEEP

Sleep deprivation has a negative effect on the function of our immune system, making us susceptible to poor health, poor recovery and we cannot achieve optimal performance.

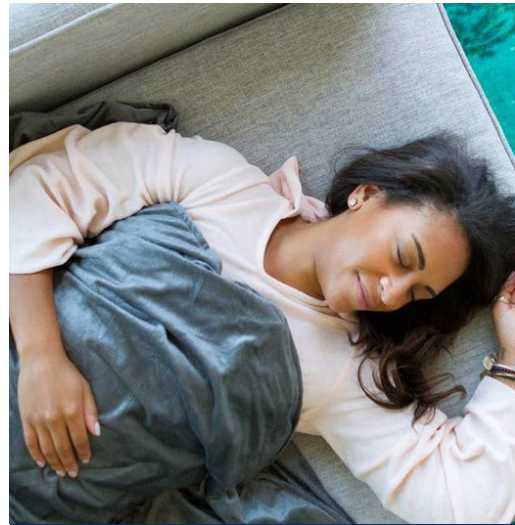
HOW MUCH SLEEP?

- 9-11 hours/night: 5-13 years old
- 8-10 hours/night: 14-17 years old
- 7-9 hours/night: 18+ years old

QUALITY OF SLEEP?

- after turning your lights out, you should be asleep within 20-30 minutes
- stay asleep through the night
- wake up spontaneously in the morning (meaning without an alarm!).
- feel refreshed within 1 hour of waking in the am.

Getting enough and good quality sleep ensures we are repairing, rebuilding and resting our bodies. Sleep should not be undervalued in your health.



SLEEP: THE DOS AND DO NOTS

DO'S:

- Keep your room comfortable, quiet and dark (a sleep mask, blackout curtains and/or ear plugs can help).
- Keep your bedroom at a comfortable temperature and humidity.
- Schedule 1-2 hours of downtime prior to bedtime that includes relaxing activities with low light exposure and no screens (the light from screens stimulates the "awake" centre in the brain).
- Practice strategies that help to regulate your autonomic nervous system (mindfulness, meditation, regular exercise, breathing).
- Go to bed and wake at the same time every day.

DO NOTS:

- Play video games, watch TV or spend time on your phone/screen in the 1-2 hours before you go to bed.
- Try to play "catch-up" on your sleep.
- Keep your phone or other light emitting devices next to your bed
- Exercise right before bed
- Participate in stimulating activities before bed
- Consume alcohol, caffeine or nicotine before bed.

THE POWER OF YOUR BREATH

Breathing is regulated by the AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM, which is how we keep breathing when we are asleep and why our breath changes in response to stimuli like being scared. BUT, we have conscious control over our breathing making it an excellent way to **REGULATE THE NERVOUS SYSTEM.**



YOUR BREATH IS YOUR #1 SYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM REGULATOR!

WE TAKE 12-24 BREATHS/MINUTE.

Many of us use chest breath which is the type of breath that we use when we are in FIGHT OR FLIGHT response (sympathetic nervous system activation). In order to regulate the nervous system we need to learn how to breathe using our diaphragm well and less of our upper chest.

The **UMBRELLA BREATH** (by Julie Wiebe, PT) teaches us how to use our diaphragm well when breathing. Our diaphragm is a primary muscle for breath, but also for our core. During the day when you feel any emotion that is triggering a fight or flight response, (such as fear, anxiety, stress, etc), stop and take 3-5 deep umbrella breaths. This will help to re-program your breathing pattern and regulate your nervous system.



HOW TO UMBRELLA BREATH

- Lay on your back, prop your head and neck with pillows so that you are comfortable and your ribs are flat on the ground. Have your knees bent and feet resting flat.
- Place your hands on your lower rib cage.
- Take a breath in, sending the air into the lower ribs at the sides and back of your ribs. You should also feel your tummy lengthen by letting your abdominal muscles relax.
- Follow that with a gentle exhale, thinking about your lower ribs closing down.
- ****It's important to not have your abs tightening - they should stay relaxed during the entire breath****
- This should be a gentle and relaxing breath where you are actively thinking about your breath, but your body feels very relaxed.
- DO THIS FOR 2 MINUTES A COUPLE TIMES A DAY.

CHANGING YOUR BREATH CAN REGULATE YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM AND IMPROVE YOUR HEALTH, SLEEP AND PERFORMANCE.

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