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Effect of Sleep on Mental Health

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As you now know, a regular sleep cycle that allows for a combination and repetition of NREM and REM sleep is crucial to a person's health.

Even though today there is still a lot of research is being done on why we need sleep, we know one thing for a fact: without sleep, your nervous system is unable to function properly.

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The Connection Between Sleep and Mental Health

In fact, lack of sleep, oversleeping and other similar problems, are may often be a symptom of mental health issues, such as depression, bipolar disorder, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), among others. However, it has also been recently established that these conditions can be caused by sleep disorders.

Sleep and Mood

Naturally, the most obvious example is anxiety. Sure, there's a big difference between having a clinically diagnosed anxiety disorder and being anxious for a short period, but we can all relate to the frustration of being unable to fall asleep because you worry.

Past or future stressful events could be keeping you up all night, but there are also

consequences, to a sleepless night, that manifest the next day. On the other hand, we can all attest to the fact that after a hard, hectic day, a good night's sleep makes us feel relaxed and stronger, upon waking up.

Popular phrases like “The best advice is found on the pillow” or “I’ll have to consult that with the pillow” or “Sleep on it”, reference the positive outcome that resting can have on our decision-making and emotional intelligence. As you can see, your sleep and mood are closely related.

When there is a sleep disorder, the deep stages of sleep may be rather short, and people may, therefore, be easily awakened. Disturbances in the REM stage can also disrupt one's sleeping pattern. Some research suggests that that's the reason why we have nightmares or unsettling dreams.

Either way, this can easily result in almost no deep, restful sleep, which has a negative impact in our waking hours. The result could manifest as drowsiness, fatigue, impaired memory, and concentration, and yes - mood swings as well.

What Does Science Say?

According to a study conducted by Harvard University, people who have reported high levels of stress and mental exhaustion, noticed an improvement in their overall mood, when they changed their sleep habits and increased their hours of sleep.

It's believed that sleep can give the brain a chance to exercise neuronal connections that otherwise might weaken from lack of activity. And when it comes to REM sleep, it's also been said that not only does it enhance learning abilities, but also contributes to a balanced emotional state.

What Can You Do?

But you don't have to get too technical to understand that a lack of sleep can affect you on a psychological level. If you're not rested enough, you'll lack the necessary energy to responsibly handle daily activities, which might make you feel unaccomplished, and probably lonely too, since a bad mood and tiredness can make you avoid social interactions.

All in all, the relationship between sleep and mental health is more complex than this. That is why a lot of scientists are currently conducting research, to find out exactly how it all connects. Nonetheless, what we know so far is enough to put sleep as a priority in our lives.

An Everlasting Connection

Good sleep is as important to mental health as mental health is to good sleep. Their relationship is intertwined and vital. It's no coincidence that the majority of people who have mental disorders suffer from sleeping problems, and vice versa - having a sleep-related problem can put you on the edge and seriously risk your mental and emotional well-being.

Can you think of a more powerful reason than your mental stability to improve your sleeping habits?

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