



Who Says What Sleep Is?

The lack of sleep epidemic and where it's come from.

"Don't worry. Be happy!"

— Meher Baba, famous Hindu sage.

The most short-sighted statement ever.

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The Epidemic

A surge of interest in the consequences of poor sleep has gotten people worried about what is perceived to be a growing epidemic. The perception is false and is more a consequence of existing social trends than a cause of a new phenomenon. Lack of sleep is a problem that has been with us for decades. It's the same as it ever was, as you would be right to suspect.

The popularity of Matthew Walker's book *Why We Sleep*, and increasingly frequent warnings in the media has gotten people taking.

[“The Epidemic of Sleep Deprivation: A Modern Curse”](#)

Huffington Post, July 30, 2017

[“The National Sleep Epidemic Is Getting More Serious — and More Dangerous, New Research Finds”](#)

Thrive Global, August 22, 2018

[“Lack of sleep is ‘epidemic’ among Canadian teens. Here’s why it has doctors worried”](#)

CBC News, January 29, 2019

This year the US The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has acted to heighten public awareness. While ostensibly a research organization, the CDC plays a “Psych Ops” role to shape public behavior in support of US health policy. The CDC disseminates good information but it also has a policy agenda. That agenda includes improving general health and reigning in the use of problematic pharmaceuticals like sleeping pills.

[“Yikes! The CDC Has Officially Declared Sleep Deprivation a Public Health Crisis!”](#)

Rise and Shine, January 12, 2019

[“Go to bed! Brain researchers warn that lack of sleep is a public health crisis”](#)

The Washington Post, January 24, 2019

[“Public health crisis of poor sleep deserves as much attention as obesity epidemic, brain researchers warn”](#)

Independent, January 25, 2019

Poor sleep has come into the spotlight, and people gravitate to the spotlight. The real origin of the issue is larger and, like a tree’s roots, it connects many issues. To better understand what sleep is you need to better understand the interests of those who give, sell, and guard this information. Sleep is an essential asset and, like money, you’re not allowed to define it for yourself.

The Principles

Most people consider the medical, scientific, and psychological establishments to be the authorities on sleep. I will tell you a little of what they say and what they don’t say, but there is a higher authority who knows far more and whom you have been trained not to follow. That authority is yourself.

Medicine knows next to nothing about sleep. I say this as a person trained in chemistry, neurophysiology, and psychotherapy. I am not trained in physiology, but fewer than 25% of sleep problems are physiological.

Sleep is not a discrete object that can be studied in vitro, and poor sleep is not pathological. Sleep problems

are dysregulations, not dysfunctions. That is to say there is nothing that is “not working,” but rather things are not working well together.

The medical take on sleep is summarized in the 1,723 page, 170 chapter, 10"x12", double column, 7th edition of *Principles and Practice of Sleep Medicine*. I have the 6th edition, a compendium of knowledge from yesteryear, gleaned from looking under the microscope. Sleep will not be found under the microscope.

Principles has nothing helpful to say about how to improve your sleep. The book contains all that doctors need to know in order to tell you that, by and large, there’s nothing they can do for you! The book is the epitome of six blind men describing an elephant. If you don’t believe me, go ask your doctor. Most likely you already have.

I’ve studied sleep as a researcher, therapist, psychonaut, and dream explorer. I have an integrative, emotion-centered approach that is not constrained by a tenure committee or a College of Medicine. Most people have been trained to rely on authorities for direction and will see this independence as is a negative. If this describes you then I say too you, “God be with you, and the best of luck.”



Doctor You

Most of my clients’ sleep problems reside in their approach to life. This is hard to accept if you see sleep as your right and rest as your servant, but if you understand that sleep emerges from being at peace with yourself then you will quickly understand why you are in conflict with sleep.

Many of my clients view their sleep problems as an irritation, similar to the way they view their life problems. Both are invitations to insight that are pinching you ever harder to get your attention. Do you really need a health crisis to motivate you to change? Might you not perceive ongoing, chronic issues as being just as compelling as an acute, desperate situation? The only people with whom I've been able to achieve massive changes are those willing to substantially change their lives and themselves.

While I can't be sure, I would bet that your sleep problems and your stubborn attitude regarding certain problems in your life are related. We talk about how important it is to relax but few recognize relaxation starts in your mind. To "relax" your thinking does not mean taking a short respite from rolling your boulder uphill.

To relax your mind is to adopt a state in which you do not have stress that's bottled-up. It's not about releasing stress, it's about not having stress to release. You need to turn the released state into a personal trait, a permanent fixture of your personality. As long as the boulder is there waiting, calling you back, your relaxation will be short lived. You might find enough relaxation to fall asleep, but you'll be back to rolling it uphill in your sleep, and you'll wake up with it pressing upon you.

Poor sleep is most likely not the result of your apnea, weight, smoking, diet, ill health, financial problems, or self-image. Rather, these things are festering during your poor sleep. Follow a path to psychological recovery and somatic problems will shift. This is what most people refuse to do. Instead, they sweep their problems into some unrelated condition: sleep.

The somatic problems are boulders pressing on you, manifestations of your dysregulation. Are you continually frustrated with something, and is it so continual that you tell yourself that it's just the way things are? Chronic frustrations have consequences well beyond your tunnel vision. The benefits you gain from them, which lies outside your tunnel vision, lie at the heart of dysregulation. What is it that draws you to eat, smoke, and fail to pursue your health? Why are you not getting air, and rest, exercise, and comfort?

In the second part of this series I'll look at the neurology of sleep, not from the perspective of diagnosing sleep dysfunction, but from the perspective of training your brain.

Here is a waking relaxation that won't put you to sleep.

Relaxation can *enliven* you!

Download “Vertical Relaxation” Audio MP3

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