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Sleep Problems Due to Economy

Get Your Peaceful Sleep Back!

By Glenn King, PhD, C.D.N., C.N., Rev

The chronic down sliding economy has now effected many Americans in the bedroom - where the associated stress is interfering with sleep at pandemic rates and resulting in declining health. A recent poll by the National Sleep Foundation (NSF) found almost one-third of Americans admit they can't get a peaceful night's sleep due to worrying about the economy, government policies, money, or their job security.

Money problems, such as personal finances (16 percent), economy (15 percent), and losing current job (10 percent) added up to 27 percent of those polled saying their sleep was disturbed in the past month primarily due to these issues.

The reality is that concern about money and financial stability have become more prevalent over the concern about the threat of a terrorist attack, or the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, or who will be the next president.

The report's co-author Michael V. Vitiello, professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences - University of Washington said, "what is very telling is that these Americans whose sleep is impacted by financial worries report that their sleep disturbance makes them much less likely to work efficiently, exercise, eat healthily, and declined libido compared to their



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better-sleeping fellow Americans."

The poll also found that the people with less sleep was more than twice as likely to miss family events, leisure activities, and work functions due to fatigue, which can accumulate more stress.

The Dangers of Too Little Sleep

"Getting enough sleep every day is as important to your health as eating healthy and being physically active!" - says Woodie Kessel, MD, MPH, Assistant Surgeon General, USPHS - ret., member of the 2009 Sleep in America poll task force.

According to the Sleep Council, not sleeping enough can result in:

1. Makes you fat! People sleeping four hours or less per night are 73 percent more likely to be overweight compared to those with sufficient sleep. Even sleeping less than six hours a night, there is a 25 percent more probability to be overweight compared to proper sleepers.

2. Increases appetite (results in weight gain). The University of Bristol researchers found that people sleeping for five hours had 15 percent more "ghrelin," a hormone that increases your appetite - compared to those with eight hours sleep. The night nappers also produce 15 percent less leptin, a hormone that suppresses appetite.

3. Accelerated aging! The University of Chicago researchers found that sleeping four hours a night for even less than seven nights will interfere with the body's ability to regulate hormone levels - which commonly accelerates aging.

4. Brain damage! A Canadian sleep expert Stanley Coren says, "you lose one IQ point for every hour of lost sleep you didn't get the night before."

The poll additionally revealed that 54 percent of adults, which is about 110 million licensed drivers, have driven when too drowsy at least once in the past year. Actually, 28 percent said

they have nodded off or fallen asleep while driving. The least obvious repercussions would be increased vehicle accidents and major public safety, but the risk of other lives and children, whether in cars or pedestrians is too scary to think about.

I personally know of a person last year that fell asleep and hit a car - with a baby in the car. The responsibility solely rest upon the person taking these risks - not just for themselves, but for other innocent lives.

Ways to Stop Worrying and Get a Good Night's Sleep

Vitiello says, "it is important for Americans to recognize that good sleep is not negotiable, rather it is a pillar of good health and function. As times get tougher, it actually becomes more important than ever to do what one can to maintain good sleep quality, as poor sleep has such an immediate impact on daily function and longer-term impact on physical health." That puts it mildly!

Unfortunately, the number of people reporting sleep problems has increased 13 percent since 2001, and greatly increased in the last three to four years. The good news is, if you're one of the sleep-deprived, there are a variety of simple techniques that can help you get the vital restful sleep needed.

Basics: First, down shift your gears into a relaxation mode. To fall asleep is much like shifting gears, which involves a whole different style of functioning and focus than the state we are in during the day. It does require relaxation and a different kind of "letting go," than when awake. An active mind at bedtime is not conducive to falling asleep, remaining asleep, plus peaceful sleep and dreams. It is important to turn off our minds and "re-focus."

Some common methods recommended are:

- **Create a relaxing bedtime routine.** Give yourself time to prepare for bed slowly. Savor the moments of winding down as you wash your face, brush your teeth, and change into your bed clothes. You may use appropriate aroma oils, soft music (temporary), and prayer is very important. But, not prayers of fears, worries, needs or concerns, but rather reflections on gratitude, thankfulness, and positive declarations and affirmations of His truth - for the good of that day and the night's sleep you are about to enjoy - as He ministers to you in your sleep from His loving-kindness and peace. You can read some enjoyable chapters in the bible that nourish you with His truth, not recommended for this purpose subjects like Job, or some of Revelation, rather books and chapters producing encouragement and peace, then pray.

- **Keep your bedroom slightly cool, quiet, and especially dark.** Typically a cool room promotes sleep - promotes you wanting to cover up and snuggle your spouse or your blanket, although a cold room interferes with sleep - so experiment. For those who have attended a TKM class - remember the "remove the blocks from your healing" protocol: mostly about blends, synthetics, metallic objects..., light, sound, no water during the night - even one sip guarantees waking again (it keeps your system busy). If your feet or hands are cold in winter, warm them up before bed!

- You could drink a cup of relaxing herbal tea, like chamomile.

- Light stretching before laying down. It actually helps stretch out some of the "kinks" from the tension of the day. Stretching makes some people more energetic and some more sleepy, so experiment to find out what works for you.

- Massaging your feet, especially with warm oil, right before bed (or having your spouse do it) is very relaxing. Some may like to listen to relaxing music or a relaxation or sleep CD, or audio Bible to help relax into sleep. Remember it should stop when finished - not set to replay, or it will keep your mind too busy once asleep.

These tips are also useful and beneficial for your health, especially for sleeping difficulties:

- Create a standard relaxing bedtime routine and maintain regular sleep times. The goal is to sleep eight hours uninterrupted. One time waking is a temporary exception, but more than once is poor sleep.
- Exercise regularly, but not too close to bedtime (finish exercising at least three to four hours before bedtime).
- Avoid foods and drinks high in caffeine (coffee, colas and tea) for at least eight hours prior to bedtime, and avoid alcohol for a few hours before bedtime. Both caffeine and alcohol disturb sleep. Preferred is to not have them in your diet 24/7.
- Use your bedroom only for sleep and intimacy (remove all work materials, computer, and TV from your bedroom). This will strengthen the association between your bedroom, bed and sleep.

Remember, relaxation and proper sleep is one of the most important antidotes to stress and insomnia, especially if you're having trouble sleeping due to the economy or any stresses outside of your control.

Deep peaceful sleep and sweet dreams!

Ref. National Sleep Foundation; Yahoo News; The Sleep Council; A. C. Grace Company; King Institute, Inc. 