



stress-free sleep worksheet

— *by* KIRK PARSLEY, MD —



introduction

Everyone is familiar with the concept of sleep being important. Along with nutrition, exercise, stress management, it's one of the 4 pillars of health.

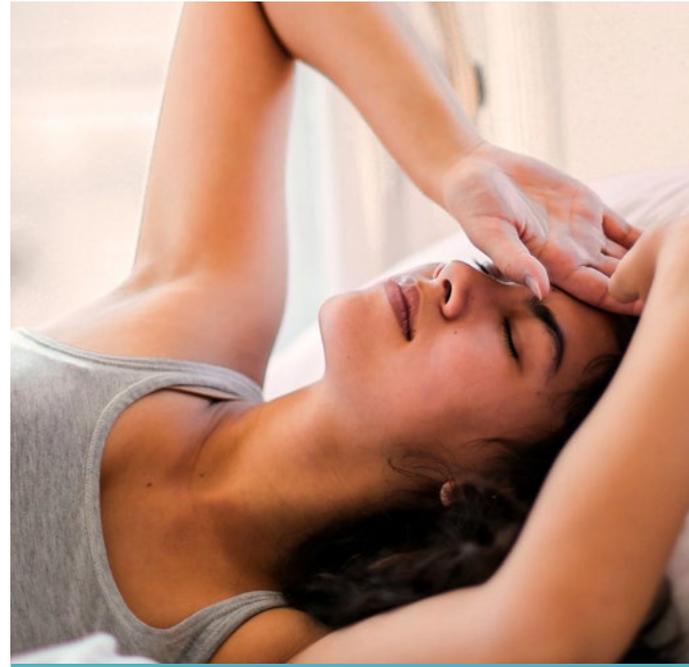
And yet, when our lives get busy and/or hectic, sleep tends to be the first things to be taken off the list of priorities.

On average, we as Americans sleep 6.2 hours. As you know, the ideal target for sleep is just over 8 hours. But 6.2 doesn't sound too far off, right?

Wrong.

The most capable your brain and body can possibly be is after they've been fully restored from a good night of adequate sleep duration and sleep quality. If you're not getting the recommended amount of sleep, here's what you can expect:

- ✧ A single night of sleep deprivation negatively alters over 700 genetic markers.
- ✧ One night of poor sleep has been shown to be more deleterious to driving safety than being over the legal blood alcohol level.
- ✧ Studies show that sleep deprivation impacts a wide range of physical and mental markers for performance: Decreased mental function, a slower reaction time, impairment of the communication facility, poor coordination, reduced physical endurance, and poor physical strength.
- ✧ Research suggests that people who are sleep deprived experience an increase in negative moods (stress, fear, anger, frustration, irritability, sadness) and a decrease in positive moods. To boot, poor sleep is often a chief contributor of mood disorders, such as depression and anxiety



It's been proven, time and time again that the most capable your brain and body can possibly be is after it has been fully restored from a good night of adequate sleep duration and sleep quality.

Especially given the climate of stress and uncertainty in the world today, sleep is the best weapon you have to both boost your immunity and perform at your absolute best.



Sleep, Managing Stress, And The Power of List Building

Lack of adequate sleep leads to increased stress hormones which interfere with your cognitive functioning. The increased stress hormones also enhance and amplify your emotions and thoughts associated with stress and fear.

As I learned during my time in the SEAL Teams, confronting, or taking action towards, stressors is the best way to decrease stress, fear, emotionality, and worry. It is therefore completely illogical to selectively confront your stressors when you are in no condition to deal with them (i.e.- when you're sleep deprived).

So, the most logical thing you can do to manage stress well is to organize your stressors and approach them when your resources are at their highest—after a good night of sleep!

As a Navy SEAL and a physician, I've had more than a few sleepless nights. Over the years, I developed a simple process for myself to organize my stressors so that I could attack and conquer them when I was at my cognitive best.

See below for my List Building Practice **(page 3)** and Sleep Optimization Checklist **(page 5)**. These are to be used in tandem to help you de-stress and optimize sleep quality:





List Building Practice:

- ✓ First, if you haven't already bought-in to the idea that you are impaired with inadequate sleep – and at your best after a good night of sleep – Please please please do whatever research/learning/reading necessary to get on board with the facts. This knowledge is a crucial first step in creating better, more empowering sleep and stress-management habits.
- ✓ (See the list worksheet below.) Sit down and hand-write your lists.
- ✓ The ideal time to write is when you are feeling your best, but don't wait for the “perfect” moment. Getting your lists out of your head and onto the paper is most important.
- ✓ Make an agreement with yourself—and any accountability partner available—that you will handle the items on your list after you have had a good night of sleep.

<p><u>TO-DO LIST</u></p> <p><i>Anything on your mind—as far out as you choose—that you can act on...</i></p>	<p><u>TO-WORRY LIST</u></p> <p><i>Things that you can't do anything about, but still feel a need to think about...</i></p>
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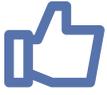
Print this page to fill out the worksheet

TO-DO LIST

Anything on your mind—as far out as you choose—that you can act on...

TO-WORRY LIST

Things that you can't do anything about, but still feel a need to think about...



Sleep Optimization Checklist:

- Pick a bedtime and a wake-time to stick to for at least several weeks.
- Set an alarm clock for 30-60 minutes before your bedtime (night-time alarm) and an alarm to wake you up 8 hours after your bedtime.
- When your night-time alarm sounds, begin your bedtime preparations and be in bed, ready to sleep no later than your bedtime.
- Remove any items that will tell you the time during your sleep time (watch, phone, clocks, etc.). Place your morning alarm out of sight (under a towel, in your drawer, under the bed).
- If you wake in the middle of the night, do not look at the clock, do not think about your list, do not do anything that will cause you to be more awake. DO: relax, meditate, visualize, breathe, etc. (anything that will relax and de-stress) until you either fall back asleep, or your alarm goes off.
- If you realize that you have left something off your list, get up and add it to the list and then go back to relaxing.
- When your morning alarm goes off, start thinking about and acting on your list—until your nighttime alarm goes off that night.