

To sleep, or not to sleep?

Tick! Tock! The seconds ticked audibly past. Outside, the night sky was pitch black. A dog barked, the sound echoing in the distance. I sat, trying wearily to stay focused at my desk, watching as my pencil moved furiously across the paper. As the precious last few hours slipped away, I let my hand rest for a moment while I wondered when it could be finished. A few moments later, I snatched up my pencil again and resumed my writing. Another hour passed. Finally, hope blossomed like light at the end of a seemingly interminable tunnel. I was coming to the last stretch... done! Exhaustedly, I sorted out the multitude of papers spread out across my desk, making sure all was in order for the next day. Enervated by the myriad of assignments I had attempted to complete that day, I then fell asleep as soon as my head touched the pillow. Unfortunately, many students around the world face the same challenges and circumstances. After some deliberation, they make the decision to stay up late, working against the clock, in order to finish homework. But, the dilemma is, *should* they? Theoretically, no. Staying up late can potentially result in health issues, low grades, and poor quality of life, as well as many other side effects.

To begin with, not getting enough sleep can lead to chronic diseases or trigger pre-existing health conditions such as asthma. To counteract this idea, some people may argue that they stay up till the break of dawn every day, without ever experiencing any problems. However, as someone with a pre-existing health condition — asthma, I know firsthand that sleeping is essential to keeping one's immune system functioning well. Consequently, one who is sleep deprived is more likely to suffer bouts of asthma or other chronic disorders. Instead of asthma impacting sleep, the situation is flipped. In this case, the amount of sleep you get impacts the frequency of one's asthma attacks. These constant illnesses can lead to serious impediment of one's daily functions, including absences from school and other responsibilities.

Additionally, sleeping extremely late can disrupt your body's internal clock. This disruption can lead to drowsiness or the tendency to sleep at abnormal times, such as during class. I often hear of others exclaiming of the late hours they had kept in order to finish various assignments, only to later observe them nodding off during meditation or other classes. When students stay up so late, it is likely they are also not getting the recommended amount of sleep. Students at our school have to wake up by 7:15 a.m. at the very least in order to prepare for the school day, which officially starts at 7:50 a.m. This means that if you had stayed up beyond 11:15 p.m. the previous night, you would have gotten less than the eight recommended hours of sleep. Over time, you will start to feel the effects of serious sleep deprivation.

Equally important is one's mental health. Have you ever heard that the amount of sleep one gets, one's sleep quality, and one's mood are related? Some simple observations can confirm this conjecture. For example, my brother will wake up grumpy if he is still sleepy, but happy other times. The amount of sleep you get has a positive or negative effect on your mood. The more

sleep you get, the more probable it is that you will be in a good mood the next day. Conversely, the less sleep you get, the more likely it is that you will be in a bad mood the next day. Hence, it follows that if you have been diagnosed with depression and do not get enough sleep, it is likely to get worse. This particular scenario did not happen to me, personally, but it did happen to a few people who I know.

However, in spite of all the obvious cons of staying up late, some may argue that without the extra hours, it would be impossible to finish homework. Sadly, that is the hard truth for many. Luckily, one way to combat this is to increase one's personal efficiency level over a period of time. You can also try other methods in order to adhere to a healthy sleeping schedule, or even let the teacher or teachers know.

I understand that homework is a huge issue, but the drawbacks of staying up late and not getting enough sleep far outweigh the benefits. Studying late at night when you are half-asleep anyways and want nothing more than to turn out the lights and fall fast asleep in your fluffy bed without a care or worry in the world does not actually help your grades. The truth is, studying at night is impractical and the memories of the material studied will be evanescent. In fact, doing homework when your mind is not at its best will lead to poor homework quality and low grades, as well. Productivity levels will also be at their lowest when you are fatigued, and it is easier to make careless mistakes.

When I visited the optometrist the other day, he told my mother and I that one of the best things to do to care for one's eyesight would be to avoid doing close-up work at night. Meanwhile, school ends so late and starts so early that we have no other choice but to do our assignments mainly at night. Although school ends at 4:05 p.m., sometimes students have to stay back after school for tutoring, study groups, or clubs. Time flies, and it can easily be 5 p.m. by the time some people actually reach home. By that time, it is showertime, dinnertime, and then in some cases Evening Ceremony. These daily tasks take up the time period from around 5 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. By the time I really start on my assignments, night has already fallen. If there is not enough time to finish homework before 10 p.m., some people may opt to wake up earlier the next morning to do it. Nevertheless, since some people may not have the time or self-control to get up the next morning to finish up, they decide to stay up even later to do it instead.

Finally, lack of sleep makes you more forgetful. This is probably because the brain uses sleep time to recharge and replenish essential body cells. When you are unable to obtain a sufficient amount of sleep, the parts of your brain which contain your memory may deteriorate slowly. Forgetfulness, part of mental health, can affect your quality of life greatly. Imagine forgetting where you had left something all the time, or always having to retrace your steps in order to find that thing. This would lead to poor time management and a large percentage of time wasted on frenzied searching.

I realize that staying up late can allocate more time for students, but that doesn't make it the right thing to do. I strongly believe that maintaining a good sleep schedule is vital for our bodies, minds, and in the long run, futures. Wouldn't it be great if we could get a healthy amount of sleep, without any harm to our grades?