

LIVE WELL WORK WELL

December 2019

 MORETON & COMPANY

Stressed to the Max? Deep Sleep Can Rewire the Anxious Brain

When it comes to managing anxiety disorders, William Shakespeare's Macbeth had it right when he referred to sleep as the "balm of hurt minds." While a full night of slumber stabilizes emotions, a sleepless night can trigger up to a 30% rise in anxiety levels, according to new research from the University of California, Berkeley.

UC Berkeley researchers have found that the type of sleep most apt to calm and reset the anxious brain is deep sleep, also known as non-rapid eye movement (NREM) slow-wave sleep, a state in which neural oscillations become highly synchronized, and heart rates and blood pressure drop.

"We have identified a new function of deep sleep, one that decreases anxiety overnight by reorganizing connections in the brain," said study senior author Matthew Walker, a UC Berkeley professor of neuroscience and psychology. "Deep sleep seems to be a natural anxiolytic (anxiety inhibitor), so long as we get it each and every night."

The findings, published in the journal *Nature Human Behaviour*, provide one of the strongest neural links between sleep and anxiety to date. They also point to sleep as a natural, non-pharmaceutical remedy for anxiety disorders, which have been diagnosed in some 40 million American adults and are rising among children and teens.

University of California - Berkeley. "Stressed to the max? Deep sleep can rewire the anxious brain: A sleepless night can trigger up to a 30 percent rise in emotional stress levels, new study shows." ScienceDaily. www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/11/191104124140.htm (accessed November 21, 2019).

"Our study strongly suggests that insufficient sleep amplifies levels of anxiety and, conversely, that deep sleep helps reduce such stress," said study lead author Eti Ben Simon, a postdoctoral fellow in the Center for Human Sleep Science at UC Berkeley.

In a series of experiments using functional MRI and polysomnography, among other measures, Simon and fellow researchers scanned the brains of 18 young adults as they viewed emotionally stirring video clips after a full night of sleep, and again after a sleepless night. Anxiety levels were measured following each session via a questionnaire known as the state-trait anxiety inventory.

After a night of no sleep, brain scans showed a shutdown of the medial prefrontal cortex, which normally helps keep our anxiety in check, while the brain's deeper emotional centers were overactive.

"Without sleep, it's almost as if the brain is too heavy on the emotional accelerator pedal, without enough brake," Walker said.





Holiday Stress: Sticking to Your Budget

Money is one of the leading causes of holiday anxiety for Americans. The best time for holiday budgeting begins early in the year, when smart shoppers account for expenses associated with the holiday gift season in their monthly budgets and buy presents here and there throughout the year.

However, if you're like most people, you likely have not planned very far ahead and could find yourself feeling the pinch in January. But don't despair—with proper accounting and a handful of smart shopping ideas, it is possible to find the perfect gift for everyone on your list and stay within your budget.

Here are a few pointers to help you stick to your holiday budget and manage your seasonal financial stress:

- **Review your shopping list carefully.** Does everyone listed on it truly need to be there?

- **Write down a maximum dollar limit for each person,** vow to stay within that limit, and then track how much you actually spend.
- **Shop early.** The best window for holiday shopping is between Oct. 1 and Dec. 1.
- **Buy in bulk.** Have something on hand for those unexpected presents. A case of wine or elegant candles are great ideas.
- **Be realistic.** Ask yourself if you can really afford to buy gifts—don't feel obligated to buy them if you can't afford them.
- **Shop online.** Some of the best bargains won't be found in stores.
- **Get a holiday job.** Even with a good budget, the extra holiday shopping can pinch the pocketbook. Consider working a seasonal job.

Cynical Social Media Voices Can Erode Trust in News Media

Amid rising concerns about low public trust in mainstream media institutions, a Rutgers study found that real-life and online social interactions can strongly influence a person's trust in newspaper, TV and online journalism – but when it comes to online interactions, cynical views are the most influential.

The study, published in the *Journal of Communication*, surveyed 350 students at a group of residential living-learning centers at Rutgers University-New Brunswick, in which students with similar academic disciplines live in the same dorms and take classes together, thus forming strong social connections.

Over the course of a semester, the Rutgers researchers found that the strongest social influences on a student's trust in news media come from face-to-face interactions with politically like-minded people. But social media interactions with online contacts were different. Students' views were strongly influenced by online contacts who distrusted the news media, and not by those who had high levels of trust in traditional news media.

Rutgers University. "Cynical social media voices can erode trust in news media: Research finds that media trust is heavily influenced by the views of others – and, in the online world, negative voices are more influential." *ScienceDaily*. www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/11/191104112814.htm (accessed November 21, 2019).

"The erosion of trust in mainstream news media, especially amid increasing political polarization in the country, large-scale disinformation campaigns and attacks on the press from political elites, is a very real concern for our society," Katherine Ognyanova, an assistant professor of communication at Rutgers University-New Brunswick's School of Communication and Information said. "Most of us like to think that we are exposed to a balanced set of views. The truth is that we are more influenced by people who agree with us and share our political opinions. Findings about the outsized influence of cynical views online are also concerning, especially given how much of our social interactions take place on the internet."



Unhealthy Habits Can Start Young: Infants, Toddlers, and Added Sugars

A new study in the Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, published by Elsevier, found that nearly two-thirds of infants (61%) and almost all toddlers (98%) consumed added sugars in their average daily diets, primarily in the form of flavored yogurts (infants) and fruit drinks (toddlers). Infants were 6-11 months, and toddlers were 12-23 months.

The analysis documented some good news in the decline over the study period (2005-6 and 2015-16) in the percentage of infants and toddlers whose daily diets include added sugars, as well as the amounts they consumed. Yet the widespread intake points to a serious and persistent problem: the early development of eating patterns associated with negative health conditions.

“Our study, which is the first to look at trends in added sugars consumption by infants and toddlers, documents that most infants and toddlers consume added sugars. This has important public health implications since previous research has shown that eating patterns established early in life shape later eating patterns,” explained lead investigator Kirsten A. Herrick, PhD, MSc, Division of Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys, National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Hyattsville, MD, USA. She cited an earlier study that found that 6-year-olds who had consumed any sugar-sweetened beverage (SSB) before the age of 1 were more than twice as likely to consume an SSB at least once a day compared to 6-year-olds who had not consumed any before the age of one.

Elsevier. “Unhealthy habits can start young: Infants, toddlers, and added sugars.” ScienceDaily. www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/11/191114075547.htm (accessed November 21, 2019).

December Recipe Slow Cooker Split Pea and Ham Soup

- 1 (1lb.) bag of dried split peas
- 1 C Celery, sliced
- 1 C Carrots, sliced
- 1 C Onion, diced
- 1 large slice of cooked ham, diced to make about 2 cups
- 6-8 C Water
- 1-2 Tbsp. Morton brand Nature’s Seasons Seasoning Blend to taste

Place all the ingredients in the slow cooker, stir, cover, and cook on high for about 4 hours.

Servings Per Recipe: 8; Amount Per Serving: Calories: 118.6; Total Fat: 1.9 g; Cholesterol: 15.9 mg; Sodium: 828.2 mg; Total Carbs: 14.5 g; Dietary Fiber: 5.1 g; Protein: 11.1 g

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