



# Empowering Yourself to Power Down

DECEMBER 2015

## FEATURED ARTICLE:

### When Keeping Up the Pace Means Powering Down Your Brain

It's December. The holidays are here and the music is telling us, "It's the most wonderful time of the year!" But most of us have a to-do list that's longer than leap year and we don't have a workshop of little elves to help get it all done. So instead, we multi-task. We run on all cylinders. We hit the ground running. We burn the midnight oil... We burn ourselves out. At some point, no matter how good we get at keeping up the pace, we find that the quest for speed eventually slows us down. Trying to do too much at once causes fatigue, confusion, frustration, and inefficiency.

The brain knows what's good for us, even when we try to ignore it. We fight past the urge to take a little nap. There's just too much to do. So what happens next? We don't remember what we were doing. We put things in the wrong place and can't find what we're looking for. We stare at our computer screens with blank faces as we try to clear the brain fog. How is any of that productive? As much as we try to ignore it, it's a fact: an efficient brain requires sufficient rest.

#### SLEEP ON THIS

"You snooze; you lose." "The early bird catches the worm." These familiar sayings glorify the hardworking early riser, creating a cultural villain of the lazy sleeper. But many high achievers credit their performance on their practice of getting adequate sleep. In April 2011, FastCompany magazine published an infographic, "How Much Sleep The Pros Get," that illustrates the amount of shut-eye averaged by some of the world's most recognizable athletes. Tennis legend Roger Federer, basketball great LeBron James, and golf champion Michelle Wie, all snooze close to 12 hours each night. Of course, not everyone can or should sleep that much. But according to information published by The New York Times in July 2015, sleep research indicates that although the amount of sleep we need differs from person to person, anything less than six hours a night is definitely not enough.

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## DECEMBER WEBINAR:

### The Brain and Sleep

Wednesday, December 16th  
12-1 pm ET and 3-4 pm ET

The brain is a powerful organ. Journey with us as we discuss how the brain works, so that you can operate and use your brain at peak performance. We will also explore the necessity of sleep and what the brain is doing during the sleep state.

**TO REGISTER:** Log on to the website with your username and password. On the homepage, click on "**Upcoming Webinars**" and follow the easy instructions to register for the webinar of your choice.

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## TO KEEP YOUR BODY AT ITS BEST, LET YOUR BRAIN HAVE SOME REST

As many experts have weighed in—Dr. Charles Czeisler, a professor of sleep medicine at Harvard, being one of them—chronic lack of sleep has been linked to physical ailments, including heart disease, diabetes, and memory loss. According to Dr. Czeisler, people who sleep less than five hours a night for five years increase their risk of hardened arteries by as much as 300 percent—damage that isn't likely to heal with the return of regular sleep. But he also indicated that a better sleep pattern can improve blood pressure in just a few weeks, so it pays to get your Zzzs.

## POWER DOWN TO RECHARGE

We can all tell when we're getting sleepy. But becoming tired isn't always a symptom of being overloaded. Some people become so hyperfocused on completing tasks and solving problems that they experience burnout before they were ever compelled to sleep. That's why it's important to recognize other conditions that may indicate a need to power down:

- Irritability or changes in mood
- Hyperactivity
- Body and muscle aches
- Headaches

Often times, though, responsibilities of work, family, and caregiving present scenarios with the potential for overload where taking a nap or going to bed aren't going to be practical options. That's when identifying other ways to power down becomes essential to keeping up. And contrary to what the makers of energy drinks want us to believe, the answer is not in a five-dollar shot of caffeine. It's more likely to be something that doesn't cost us a thing:

- Stretching for a few minutes, including shoulder and head rolls
- Staying hydrated with plenty of water instead of soda or coffee
- Getting some fresh air, if even for a minute or two
- Finding ways to shut out noise, perhaps with headphones

By finding ways to recharge that fit into our day, we can not only restore ourselves to a more positive mental state, but also help reduce the kinds of counterproductive activities that result when we're overloaded. Finally, let's remind ourselves to take one thing at a time and resist the pressure to rush, because "haste makes waste" is a familiar phrase that actually is largely true.

## THIS MONTH, LET E4 HEALTH BE YOUR RESOURCE FOR:

- Counseling for any issue that's keeping you from relaxing
- Online learning via our webinar, "The Brain and Sleep" on Wednesday, December 16th
- Tips to help you create downtime within a busy schedule
- Articles on topics related to sleep and self care
- Daily living resources and referrals—to give you some breathing room

ALWAYS AVAILABLE  
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For whatever work or life issue is on your mind, or for anything related to daily living that you could use some extra help with, let E4 Health be your resource. It's free, it's confidential, and it's available to you, as well as your family and household members. Just call or log on to get started.

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## SOURCES:

<http://www.fastcodesign.com/1663723/infographic-of-the-day-why-pro-athletes-sleep-12-hours-a-day>  
<http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/07/24/ask-well-catching-up-on-lost-sleep/>