

EMOTIONAL WELLNESS MATTERS

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Sleep and the Sleep Disorders

"To sleep,
perchance to dream -
ay, there's the rub."

William Shakespeare, from Hamlet

The National Sleep Foundation tells us that nearly half of us don't get enough sleep. In modern-day society, because of night work, television, computers, and the profound stress we experience in everyday life, our sleep is often disrupted. Sleep is a basic biological need, like hunger and thirst. When we don't get enough of it, our bodies let us know that there are consequences. Sleep is a regular, natural state of rest characterized by a reduction in voluntary body movement and a decreased awareness of the surroundings. Sleep is not a state of falling completely into unconsciousness, but rather an altered state of consciousness that performs a restorative function for the brain and body.

Why Do We Sleep?

An older view on the function of sleep suggested that sleep is a period of rest from the activity of the day. It occurs at night when we would be safer by staying out of harm's way. We know now, however, that sleep is much more than just a period of recuperation from the energy expended during the course of the day. A great deal happens during our sleep that is vital to maintaining our health.



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