**10 Reasons to go Back to Bed**

It's Monday. For most of us, that means it's back to the grind — whether that grind be work, school, or some other scheduled obligation. Unfortunately for weekend warriors everywhere, these obligations typically require us to get up earlier than we'd choose if it were up to us.

But sleep is important — and not just because it's warm and cozy under your comforters. So in the spirit of sweet, sweet slumber, here are ten excellent reasons to help you justify hitting the snooze button the next time you feel like grabbing a few extra z's.

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**10) Sleep deprivation is becoming increasingly problematic nationwide**

In 2005, a poll conducted by the National Sleep Foundation concluded that Americans averaged just 6.9 hours of sleep per night. To many of us, that might not sound too shabby, but according to the report, that's two hours less than people were sleeping on a nightly basis back in the 19th century; an hour drop per night compared to fifty years ago; and 15—25 minutes less per night since the turn of the century.

You're not a sheep, are you? Buck the trend — get more than 6.9 hours of sleep a night and help turn that average around.

**9) Lack of sleep can accumulate over the course of several days**

The idea that the negative effects of sleep deprivation can add up over time may not come as a surprise to you (the popular term for this is sleep debt), but few of you have probably realized just how dramatic these cumulative effects can be.

In one of the most extensive human sleep deprivation studies ever conducted, researchers at the University of Pennsylvania limited study volunteers to various levels of sleep deprivation for 14 consecutive days (for example, 6 hours in bed per night for two weeks straight). The researchers then compared test participants' cognitive and physiological abilities at the end of this period to those of test participants who had gone one, two, and three nights without sleep.

Their results showed that restricting sleep to six hours per night caused cognitive performance and reaction times to drop so dramatically, that by the end of the 2-week period, these test participants were performing as poorly as subjects who had forgone sleep for two nights in a row.

**8) You're a terrible judge of how tired you really are**

Here's the scary part about the experiment we just mentioned: Every day, the test participants who were subjected to consecutive nights of decreased sleep were asked to rate their subjective feelings of sleepiness... and their self-assessments were total crap.

While increases in self-rated sleepiness were observed, they were small — and even at the end of the two week testing period, most volunteers believed themselves to be functioning relatively normally, even though their cognitive and physiological abilities were comparable to those of subjects who had gone days without sleeping at all.

**7) If you don't, you'll die**

Depending on who you ask, the world record for intentional sleep deprivation is somewhere between 11 and 19 days. The people who endure these long bouts of sleeplessness reportedly recover within a few days, and there have been no known deaths due to forced human wakefulness (that we know of — see reason number 1).

That said, experiments in rats have shown that continuous sleep deprivation for upwards of two weeks inevitably leads to death; and outcomes are also fatal in rare cases where humans are literally unable to sleep. Such is the case with fatal familial insomnia (FFI). FFI is an exceedingly rare prion disease of the brain. Its progression is marked by a complete inability to sleep, dementia, and eventually death, with the typical survival span for FFI patients being between 7 and 36 months.

**6) The dangers of Microsleeps**

The American Academy of Sleep Medicine defines a microsleep as an episode, lasting anywhere between a fraction of a second to half a minute, during which external stimuli are not perceived.

Your most memorable encounters with microsleeps have probably been while trying in vain to stay awake during a movie or lecture, your head jerking around like some droopy-eyed bobble-head doll; but micro sleeps are most dangerous when we don't notice them at all. Have you ever driven through an intersection only to realize that you had no idea what color the traffic light was? There's a chance you were experiencing a bout of microsleep.

**5) Lack of sleep is expensive**

The American Academy of Sleep Medicine reports that there are an average of 250,000 accidents every year related to sleep — which sounds high, until you read that as many as 80,000 drivers may be falling asleep behind the wheel every day (think about it: many of them are probably experiencing microsleeps).

And while the cost to human life is obviously high (the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates — conservatively — that drowsy driving results in over 1500 deaths annually), its monetary cost is also enormous. In 1994, a special report for the National Commission on Sleep Disorders Research found that all told, accidents related to sleep deprivation are estimated to have an annual economic impact in the range of $43 billion to $56 billion dollars.

**4) Improve your sex life**

A 2009 study conducted by the National Sleep Foundation found that 75 percent of respondents reported symptoms of sleep problems — problems that carried over into many of the respondents' sexual encounters (or lack thereof).

According to CBS, roughly one quarter of the respondents with partners reported that their sexual relationships had been hurt because they had "been too sleepy," and that "they had sex less often or lost interest in having sex because they were too tired."

Too tired for a roll in the hay? Please, people — hit snooze for sex's sake.

**3) It's probably making you fat**

Evidence continues to pile up that prolonged periods of partial sleep loss may increase your risk of both obesity and diabetes via a number of different metabolic pathways, including your body's ability to regulate glucose (i.e. the development of insulin resistance), and your brain's ability to keep your hunger and appetite in check.

**2) Sleep in, save your grade**

Whether you're a morning person or a night owl, a little extra shut-eye in the a.m. could mean the difference between an "A" and a "B" (or passing a class and repeating it the following semester).

In 1997, University of Minnesota researchers conducted a study on more than 7,000 high school students whose school district had recently switched from a 7:15 am start time to an 8:40 am start time. According to the American Psychological Association:

Compared with students whose schools maintained earlier start times, students with later starts reported getting more sleep on school nights, being less sleepy during the day, getting slightly higher grades and experiencing fewer depressive feelings and behaviors.

**1) Because sleep deprivation is torture**

The use of sleep deprivation as a CIA interrogation technique has stirred up intense controversy in recent years, with many scientists — including James Horne, from the Loughborough University Sleep Research Centre — quick to characterize it as absolutely and unequivocally torturous. [Torture victim via]

Descriptions of the interrogation tactic — like this one from psychotherapist John Schlapobersky, consultant to the Medical Foundation for Victims of Torture who was himself tortured through sleep deprivation — make us inclined to agree:

I was kept without sleep for a week in all. I can remember the details of the experience, although it took place 35 years ago. After two nights without sleep, the hallucinations start, and after three nights, people are having dreams while fairly awake, which is a form of psychosis.

By the week's end, people lose their orientation in place and time — the people you're speaking to become people from your past; a window might become a view of the sea seen in your younger days. To deprive someone of sleep is to tamper with their equilibrium and their sanity.