Sleep and Eating Disorders

“The average adolescent patient coming in for eating disorder treatment is reporting an average of 4.2 hours of sleep per night.”

~Craig Johnson, Ph.D., CEDS, FAED
Chief Clinical Officer, Eating Recovery Center

- According to the National Sleep Foundation, teens need about 9.25 hours of sleep each night to function at their best. Yet most teens do not get enough sleep. One study found that only 15% reported sleeping 8 1/2 hours on school nights.*

- In addition, recent studies at Mayo Clinic show that getting more quality sleep may also have a positive effect on the body's glucose and insulin levels. In fact, researchers are suggesting that lack of sleep is also linked to weight gain in some cases. In such a fast-paced, over-worked society it is difficult to find five hours to slow down -- let alone 9 or 10. But research is starting to show that proper sleep could help resolve complications like obesity, diabetes and hypertension.

- One thing is clear, sleep is one of the most overlooked ways to nourish our bodies. “Ninety-nine percent of people who think they only need five hours of sleep a night are actually hurting themselves,” said Dr. Lee Green of the department of family medicine at the University of Alberta in Canada.**

** Courtesy of ABC News: http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/health/2012/10/16/lack-of-sleep-linked-to-weight-gain/
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Strategies for Better Sleep

• Those who struggle with insomnia or restless sleep can employ a few mindfulness or meditation techniques before bedtime. Pranayama or breathing techniques have a calming effect on the brain and have been shown effective in reducing anxiety. For sample exercises, visit the mindfulness section of the NORMAL website (www.normal-life.org/mindfulness-meditation)

• If breathing, meditation or other yoga techniques aren't working, try one of these 7 steps to better sleep, courtesy of Mayo Clinic.***

  1. Stick to a sleep schedule
  2. Pay attention to what you eat and drink (don’t go to bed hungry or stuffed and limit nicotine, caffeine or alcohol)
  3. Create a bedtime ritual (take a warm bath or shower, read or listen to soothing music)
  4. Get comfortable (find a cool, dark, quiet space for sleeping and make sure your mattress is comfortable!)
  5. Limit daytime naps
  6. Include physical activity in your daily routine
  7. Manage stress

• If these don't work, it may be time to find help and professional guidance. In many local universities, free resources are available. Many sleep programs offer free treatment in exchange for participation in research studies. Harvard University's Division of Sleep Medicine is currently recruiting participants, as is the Johns Hopkins Sleep Disorders Center, among many others.

***Courtesy of Mayo Clinic: http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/sleep/HQ01387/NSECTIONGROUP=2
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