



COLORADO LAWYER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Get Better Sleep Without Counting Sheep

“Sleep is the best meditation.” ~ Dalai Lama

The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke report that about 40 million Americans suffer from sleep disorders, and an additional 20 million more have occasional sleep problems. Sleep deprivation effects our minds, bodies, and emotions. Research has shown sleep-deprived people can perform just as badly as intoxicated people on driving simulators and in hand-eye coordination tasks. This is not surprising since the National Sleep Foundation’s 2005 Sleep in America poll revealed that more than one-third of the participants reported that they have actually fallen asleep at the wheel.

There are many reasons for sleep deprivation. The Mayo Clinic names several including, but not limited to, snoring, sleep apnea, stress and anxiety, depression, arthritis, asthma, thyroid disorders, narcolepsy, restless leg syndrome, poor sleep habits, a change in your environment or work schedule, and substance abuse. Lack of sleep increases the incidence of diabetes, cognitive impairments, weight gain, memory loss, automobile accidents; and, it negatively impacts immune functions responsible for healing in the body. And just who do you think is sleep deprived? Lawyers. Lawyers are, according to most studies, one of the most sleep deprived professional populations in the United States. Do your clients, your co-workers, your family, and the profession a favor: get more sleep!

Some suggestions for getting a good night’s sleep include:

- Keep a regular sleep schedule (go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, even on weekends).
- Manage your stress during the day; holding on to resentments or stressors at night will keep you up or even wake you up well before your alarm clock goes off.
- Exercise, but not after 9pm.
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol (especially late in the evening).
- Have a relaxing bedtime ritual such as taking a bath or reading something calming and non-work related.
- If you can, take short “power naps” (long naps actually interfere with the quality of your nighttime sleep).
- Don’t lie in bed awake; if you can’t sleep, get up and do something productive, or reach for a good book to pass the time rather than tossing and turning.

- Control your room environment (no technological equipment such as cell phones or laptops) and temperature (not too hot or cold).
- Avoid watching TV in bed.
- See a doctor if your sleep problem continues.

Getting a good 7 to 8 hours of sleep every night can drastically improve your health and wellbeing, not to mention your productivity and success at work. Make it a priority for at least a month. You'd be surprised at how good you feel!

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