

# Sleep (To Be Retitled When I Think of A Better One - Note That I Am Posting This at 2:30 AM)

Post by “Cassius” of February 11, 2022 at 2:39 AM

in the study of Epicurus we find ourselves with a fair share of people who are going through rough times in their lives, and one of the ways that rough times manifest themselves is in alteration of "normal" sleep patterns.

A friend today sent me this article linked below, by someone who claims that we should re-examine just how much sleep is healthy. He argues that at times less sleep can correlate with a better - and not worse - frame of mind.

I know nothing about the author of this article and his qualifications or views on any other subject, but the opening section caught my eye, and I wonder how it correlates with the views of others here. The challenging initial section that caught my eye was this:

Quote

**Comfortable modern sleep is an unnatural superstimulus. Sleepiness, just like hunger, is normal.**

In this section, I make the following analogy:

1. Experiencing hunger is normal and does not necessarily imply that you are not eating enough. Never being hungry means you are probably eating too much.
2. Experiencing sleepiness is normal and does not necessarily imply that you are undersleeping. Never being sleepy means you are probably sleeping too much.

Read the section and see what you think: <https://guzey.com/theses-on-sleep/>

Most of us i think probably agree that oversleeping correlates with some form or degree of depression.

So maybe occasionally being up at 2:30 AM, and being sleepy during the day, is not such a bad thing at all?

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Post by “SimonC” of February 11, 2022 at 6:59 AM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2395-sleep-to-be-retitled-when-i-think-of-a-better-one-note-that-i-am-posting-this-at/>

Interesting. I believe in general inducing some stress every now and then is a good thing, so I can see that acute sleep deprivation occasionally might not be harmful.

I've slept around 6 hours per night the last decade with no bad effects as far as I can tell.

One thing to note about the article is that the author's correlation between depression and sleep is based on bipolar patients - people with unipolar depression normally sleep less when they are depressed.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of February 11, 2022 at 7:25 AM**

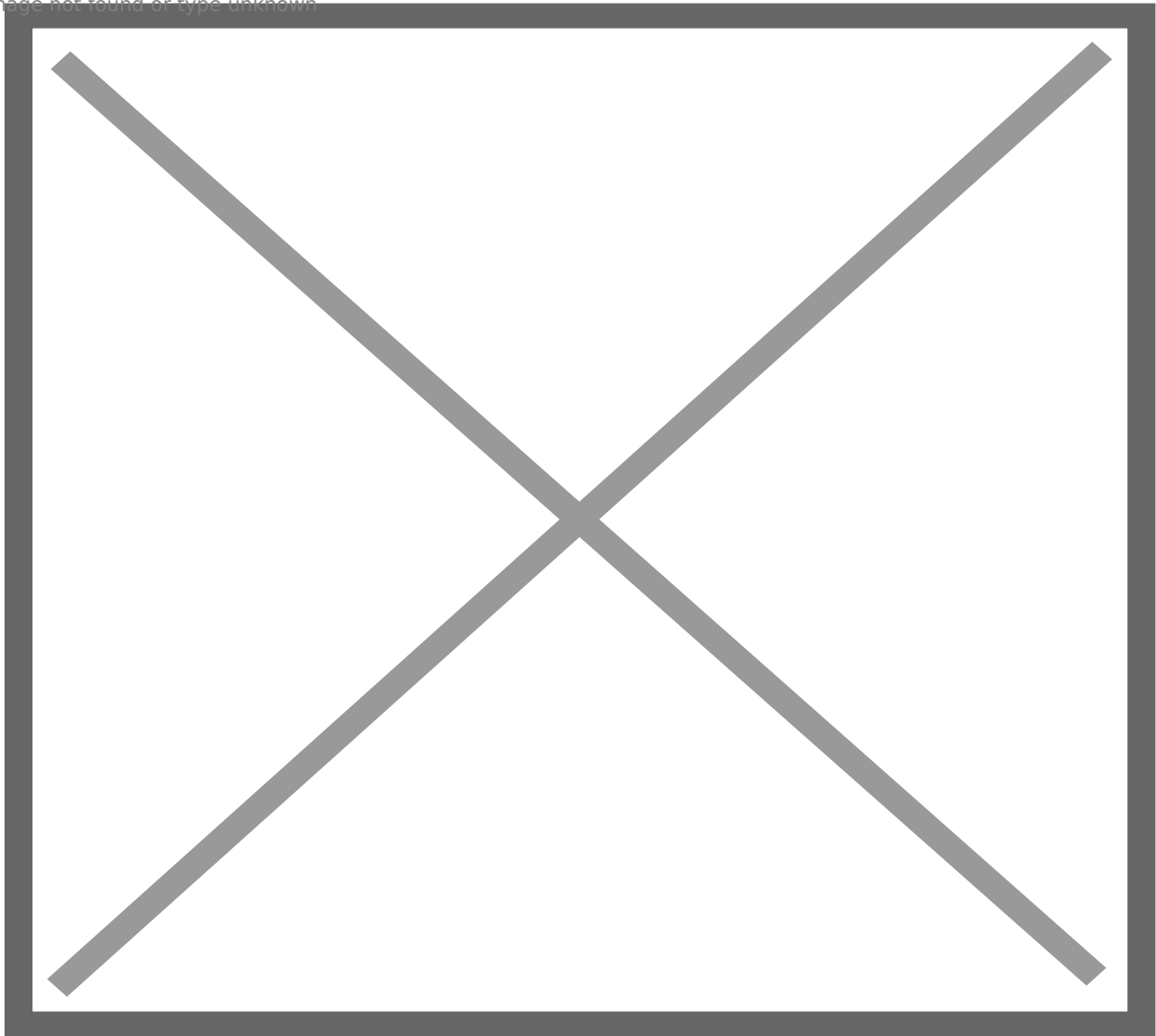
Yes I am for the moment discounting that he has any real science behind him and just entertaining how the general observation compares with my (our!) Own experience. But even more, the thought that there may be a parallel between (1) modern health issues in regard to sugar and (2) modern sleep conditions in fact being more supportive of sleep at least physically, strikes me as possible.

I wish I could compare this to something in the Epicurean texts (probably Lucretius) but I am not able to think of anything on point, with the possible exception of the issue of "romantic love" or maybe more generally "wealth" to which we today may be more overstimulated than in the past.

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### **Post by “Don” of February 11, 2022 at 7:31 AM**

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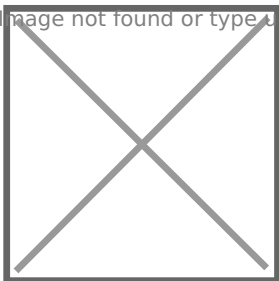


### [The myth of the eight-hour sleep](#)

Sleeping in one eight-hour chunk is a very recent phenomenon, and lying awake at night could be good for you, according to scientists and historians.

[www.bbc.com](http://www.bbc.com)

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### [Segmented Sleep in Preindustrial Societies](#)

[www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov)

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2395-sleep-to-be-retitled-when-i-think-of-a-better-one-note-that-i-am-posting-this-at/>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biphasic\\_and\\_polyphasic\\_sleep#%3A%7E%3Atext%3DBiphasic\\_sleep\\_%28or\\_dip](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biphasic_and_polyphasic_sleep#%3A%7E%3Atext%3DBiphasic_sleep_%28or_dip)

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/sleep...-may-be-natural>

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### **Post by “Scott” of February 11, 2022 at 9:11 AM**

Cassius this is a great topic and worthy of investigation and discussion. The particular article you referenced, and its author, are not however, a very good sources of information. The article is littered with many bits of accurate information and truths, but also... lots of unsupported assertions, interesting anecdotal evidence, conflations, stretched analogies, etc. Debunking all those would take gobs of time. However, the article does stir up thought and offers interesting insights. I've occasionally had trouble sleeping through a "full night" and have read some about this stuff over the years, including about the 2 segment night sleep idea and historical sleep pattern changes that Don's article refers to. Also about people / groups / cultures that employ daytime napping, and there is little doubt in my mind that sleeping 8 hours straight per night (or 7-9 as Guzey usually refers to) is not set in stone. I found that once I stopped worrying about it on those occasions when I woke up in the middle of the night or had other "variations", I really didn't have any further troubles. Sleep varies over time, within one's personal experience, and between different people. That's OK. Figure out what works for you.

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### **Post by “Cassius” of February 11, 2022 at 10:42 AM**

#### [Quote from Scott](#)

The particular article you referenced, and its author, are not however, a very good sources of information. The article is littered with many bits of accurate information and truths, but also... lots of unsupported assertions, interesting anecdotal evidence, conflations, stretched analogies, etc. Debunking all those would take gobs of time. However, the article does stir up thought and offers interesting insights. I'

Yes you're definitely right. I didn't take the time to research him other than in the most cursory way, and so reading into the question really probably starts with the type article Don referenced combined with our own anecdote of personal experiences. I really considered the first part of the article (the only part I did more than "skim") as little more than an assertion of personal experience too.

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2395-sleep-to-be-retitled-when-i-think-of-a-better-one-note-that-i-am-posting-this-at/>

I think I've read enough already not to be anxious about getting the "one eight hour chunk" type of sleep.

Like most people probably I have long been aware of the "siesta" in some cultures, but I've never followed up on that to see what that means for how long such people sleep at night.

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### **Post by "Scott" of February 11, 2022 at 11:01 AM**

#### [Quote from Cassius](#)

I didn't take the time to research him other than in the most cursory way

What?!? At 2:30 AM you should be getting out all your research tools and begin the analyzing!



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### **Post by "Godfrey" of February 11, 2022 at 11:59 AM**

I can't think of any Epicurean references offhand, but as I recall Marcus Aurelius wrote a passage about dragging his butt out of bed in the morning. Surely other ancient writers addressed sleep as well in some fashion?

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### **Post by "Kalosyni" of February 11, 2022 at 2:20 PM**

First of all you must trust your own sense of bodily feeling, for if you disregard what you feel, how will you know what you should do? (What is the Epicurean saying on this?)

So then the question is: How does your body feel? If your body feels okay then no problem.

But if the body feels bad...then over the long term, feelings of tiredness in the body are going to have detrimental health affects. And I have researched this...there are some studies that say poor sleep quality affects brain health.

Every person will have their unique situation to deal with...

Here are some possible causes:

- 1) Noisy sleep environment, uncomfortable bed/room temperature, or too much ambient room light during the night
- 2) Emotional worries over problems, life decisions, or unfinished work
- 3) Napping during the day - this perpetuates the night time sleep problems
- 4) Going to bed too early or having inconsistent bedtimes
- 5) Too much blue light from computer screens or tv screens in the evening hours
- 6) Not getting adequate bodily movement (exercise)

I have quite a bit of experience with sleep deprivation. For myself: generally one or two nights of poor sleep are okay for me, if they are then followed by a few nights of better sleep...as long as my body can recover. But when longer stretches of poor sleep occur, I notice that it is harder for me to want to exercise and I all eat more calories due to carb cravings. For me it can be environmental noise which wakes me, or emotional stress wakes me sometimes when nights are quiet. Then when it is a combination of these two problems it can be a real problem. I once went through a two week stretch of poor sleep...and my body felt very ill from lack of sleep.

Human beings were originally hunters and gatherers on the move and at some point the psyche might benefit from moving to a new environment. One way to deal with this without actually moving is to rearrange the bedroom layout and to see in what ways it can be made to be more cozy (and also the entire house to remove clutter and improve comfort).

I've read that there shouldn't be bookshelves or tv's (nor computers) in the bedroom -- it should be designed and maintained for sleep only, so no other activities (other than sex) should occur in the bedroom. Also that means it might be good to find a comfortable place other than the bedroom for middle of the night reading.

When awake in the middle of the night do relaxing things, sit still and breath calmly.

Eat a very small middle of the night snack - something with carbs - bread, cereal, or yogurt.

Journaling in the middle of the night can be a way to deal with worries over problems or unfinished work - write it all out and/or make lists - then close the notebook and say "Okay I can set this aside now since I've written it all out and can put it out of my mind. I take a vacation from it now. I will come back to it tomorrow."

After you set down your notebook... Do slow deep breathing while laying still in bed...that has a certain quality of a slow rise and fall (it has a sound quality of air flow which could be described as the sound of air when a child is slowly swinging up and down on a swing-set). In some cases

even if you are awake, this kind of laying still in bed and deep breathing can be restorative.

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### Post by “smoothiekiwi” of February 11, 2022 at 4:44 PM

Yes, I agree with [Kalosyni](#) . In fact, I have noticed that I require 9 hours in order to have a pleasant (!) life.

Yes, I may also function with only 8 hours of sleep (as I do now). But the pain of being sleepy outweighs the benefits BY FAR. And so, I honestly consider this thesis very questionable.

Is it effective to sacrifice a bit of sleep for performance? Maybe.

Is it pleasant? Heck no.

Is it good for your body? Obviously not (our body would most certainly go hunting, not sleeping, if the amount of sleep could be set lower!)

So, to sum up, I think that everyone should listen to their emotions and feelings. For some people, like [Matt](#) , 6 hours are enough. For me, 9 hours are necessary. In either case, we should listen to our own feelings, not studies. The Canon of Truth doesn't have reason, after all 😊

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### Post by “Kalosyni” of February 11, 2022 at 7:35 PM

I just found this interesting article...which says: "Take sleep problems seriously" as poor sleep quality could lead to future depression:

Quote

#### **Take sleep problems seriously.**

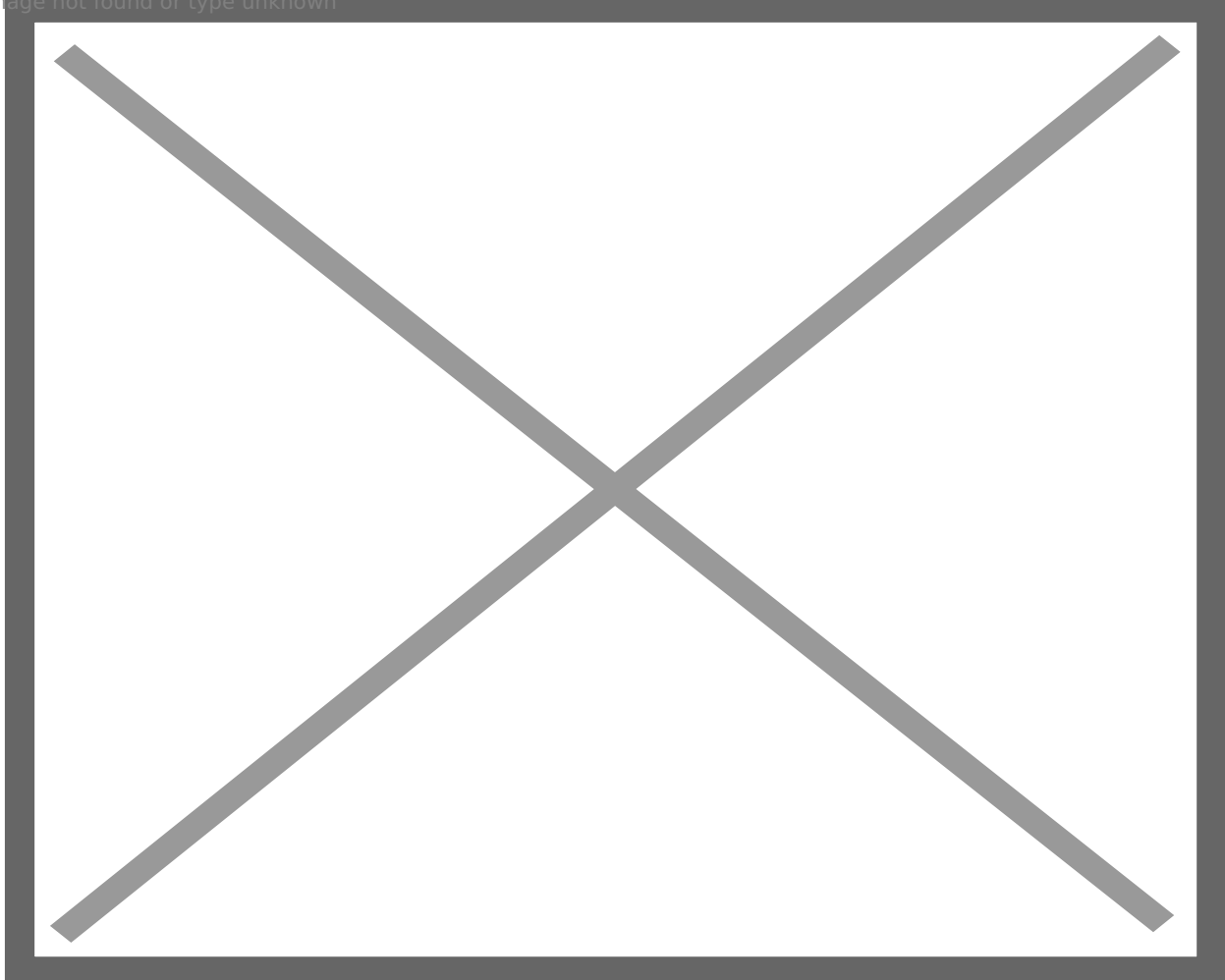
You should tell your doctor if you:

- have trouble falling or staying asleep
- feel tired during the day
- have physical pain, discomfort or other complaints (for instance, signs of obstructive sleep apnea or pauses in breathing at night) that prevent you from

getting a good night's sleep

Treatments such as cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia and continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) devices for apnea can restore good sleep, helping you sidestep related conditions like depression. (People with sleep apnea have a fivefold higher risk of depression.)

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### [Depression and Sleep: Understanding the Connection](#)

People with insomnia have a higher risk of depression. On the other hand, depression can trigger sleep problems. Knowing the connection between depression and...

[www.hopkinsmedicine.org](http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org)

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**Post by “Godfrey” of February 11, 2022 at 9:33 PM**

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2395-sleep-to-be-retitled-when-i-think-of-a-better-one-note-that-i-am-posting-this-at/>

Another thing to consider when discussing how many hours of sleep are necessary is to clarify whether you're talking about time in bed or time actually asleep. It's not unusual to be awake for ten percent (give or take depending on age and other factors) of the hours in bed. Much of this time is such short interruptions that you're barely, or not, aware of it, though it also includes getting up to use the bathroom and falling right back to sleep &c.

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### **Post by “Pacatus” of April 1, 2022 at 6:41 PM**

Unfortunately, none of us may be "average." So I think that Kalosyni is right: we need to pay attention to our own (possibly variable) rhythms. My wife is sure that I operate on something like a 23 hour cycle, 😊 and so adherence to clock-time doesn't work for me. Sometimes I'm up till the wee hours; sometimes I'm in bed at "dark-thirty." It's a bit like my ADHD: I've learned that the worst I can do is fight it. Following nature is also following my own nature, as best I can.

Oh, and I do like naps!

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### **Post by “Pacatus” of April 1, 2022 at 6:50 PM**

#### [Quote from Godfrey](#)

as I recall Marcus Aurelius wrote a passage about dragging his butt out of bed in the morning.

Ah yes. But my pleasure-loving self enjoys those long, half-asleep morning-moments. 😊 (The Epicurean versus the Stoic?)

As Theodore Roethke wrote:

"I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow."

(Funny how that line is embedded in my memory ... 😎 )

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### **Post by “Matt” of April 10, 2022 at 8:28 AM**

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2395-sleep-to-be-retitled-when-i-think-of-a-better-one-note-that-i-am-posting-this-at/>

I haven't slept in or slept more than 6.5 hours max in the last 6 years or so. Between my job that vacillates between day shift and night shift, kids and just the fact that I don't fall asleep right away and I am thinking about the sword of Damocles that will always fall on me from various corners of my life instead of sleeping. I do miss the days of a solid "lay in" after 10 hours. But circumstances change, but this is a personal hope for me to get back into a more restful rhythm.

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### **Post by "Cassius" of April 10, 2022 at 8:59 AM**

[Quote from Matt](#)

and I am thinking about the sword of Damocles that will always fall on me from various corners of my life

Now that part at least sounds like a job for Epicurean philosophy!

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### **Post by "Godfrey" of April 10, 2022 at 12:33 PM**

There are techniques, such as journaling or making a checklist sometime before going to bed, that encourage a brain dump to help clear the mind.

Sometimes of late I think of my coming night's sleep as a delicious, nourishing meal to enjoy.

"The sword of Damocles" is a great description of what I faced a decade or so ago, for a decade or so. Thanks for that [Matt](#) ! At times I regret that I didn't have the benefit of Epicurean philosophy back then and was obsessed with the "sword".