

The Psychology Newsletter

This newsletter is written by qualified healthcare professionals to provide you with brief evidence-based information and advice on a range of mind and body related topics that may help you improve the quality of your life and well-being. This newsletter will be offered to you on a monthly basis.

Psychology is the science of the mind. It is the foundation of who we are. It allows us to understand our children, others and our own behaviours and thoughts. Psychology makes you a more insightful person, allows change to be possible, helps improve the way you live your life and increases overall performances in your work, social or personal environment. It is important to be non-judgmental, open-minded and want to learn more about our psychology.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

The Power Of Sleep	1
Childhood Obesity & TV	2
How Does Our Sexuality Change As We Age?	3
Brief Intro Of Epilepsy?	3
6 Helpful Attitude Tips	4

THE POWER OF SLEEP

Studies have shown that **chronic lack of sleep will cause many health problems.**

According to researchers, chronic sleep loss can reduce the capacity to perform basic metabolic functions, such as processing and storing carbohydrates or regulating hormone secretion.

This can lead to an increased risk of developing such problems as **obesity, hypertension, memory loss and even diabetes.**

Did you know that the average night's sleep decreased from about nine hours in 1910 to about 7.5 hours in 1975? This is a trend that continues to increase in our modernized 'time-pressured' society.

Many people will think of 'sleep' as a passive activity. But that is wrong. The brain is actually very active. More active than during the waking state. For example, there are cells in our brains that fire 5 to 10 times more frequently dur-

ing certain phases of sleep than when awake.

While it is true that everyone has their own sleep requirements, **most adults will need between 7 and 8 hours each night** in order to maintain optimal functioning.

The sleep cycle is composed of 5 different stages. During these stages our breathing, heart beat and blood pressure changes. The final stage, also known as REM (Rapid Eye Movement), appears to be responsible with memory. Studies have shown that people who were deprived of REM sleep could not recall what they had learned, while those deprived of non-REM could.



Here are a few suggested sleeping tips:

- Maintain a regular bed time and wake time schedule
- Establish a regular bed-

time routine (e.g. hot bath or soaking in a tub)

- Create a sleep conducive environment (dark, quiet, and comfortable)
- Use your bedroom only for sleep and sex (leave work material, computers out of the room)
- Eat meals at least 2-3 hours before bedtime
- Exercise regularly (exercise contributes to sounder sleep)
- Avoid smoking close to bedtime (can lead to poor sleep)
- Avoid caffeine close to bedtime (can keep you awake)
- Avoid alcohol close to bedtime (can disrupt sleep later in the night)

If you suffer from some form of sleep difficulty do contact your physician or you can call us on any of the numbers mentioned at the back of this newsletter.

References:

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CHILDHOOD OBESITY & TV

The modern lifestyle of computer screens or television is pushing us more and more to an unhealthy lifestyle resulting in a decrease in physical activity and an increase in food intake. As a matter of fact, the number of children, teenagers and adults that are overweight and obese is quite alarming.

So what are the effects of TV on your health and in particular on your child's health?

To begin with, the whole "process" of watching television is NOT an active one: Television involves sitting on a sofa and NOT moving. It is literally the laziest thing you can do. The majority of us appreciate a companion during our TV marathons, the most popular of which is junk food which contains high levels of dangerous fat, sugar and salt. We choose this companion because we are sure there will be no interruptions during our favorite show and we won't be judged as we open that second pack of mon-



ster chips!

If television is concerned with promoting a healthy lifestyle, then where are the TV commer-

cial promoting healthy good groups such as fruit and vegetables?

Instead, the opposite occurs and we are bombarded with advertisements promoting high calorie foods such as cakes, soft drinks, chips and pastries. With some children watching over five hours a day of television, it is no great surprise that obesity levels, especially among children, are reaching epidemic proportions.

This is not a problem that concerns simply children. Adults are perhaps more aware of the power and influence of advertising but they are just as prone to eating junk while watching TV as children. How many of us are guilty of snacking the wrong foods in front of the TV?

We can keep looking for excuses when we pile on a few extra kilos but if our concern is to protect our child's health then we should consider more closely the power of television.

Overall, whether we are guilty of snacking in front of the TV or not, we should focus on recreational activities that promote exercise and reduce time spent in front of the TV or computer.

Making positive lifestyle changes for you and your family will dramatically improve your health and reduce the possibility of serious, life-threatening diseases.:

- Keep TV's out of children's bedroom
- Limit the number of hours spent watching TV

- Teach your children to be savvy consumers and let them understand that what they want is not necessarily what they need
- Make mealtimes TV-free



- Encourage alternative entertainment: play a board game with your child, read, or listen & dance to music!
- Use an exercise or a treadmill while watching TV
- Put a fruit bowl next to you rather than sitting with a big bowl of popcorn on your lap!
- Set a good example by limiting your own television viewing!

"It is naïve to believe that hundreds of millions spent on advertising each year has no effect on eating habits. When coupled with the fact that obesity is reaching disturbing proportions, TV advertising and diet are certainly linked".

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2. Eisenmann, RT Barteel, M Qi Wang. Physical activity, TV viewing, and weight in US youth: 1999 youth risk behavior survey. *Obes Res*. 2002; 10(5):379-385.
3. Halford JCG, Gillespie J, Brown V, Pontin EE & Dovey TM . Effect of television advertisements for foods on food consumption in children. *Appetite* 2004;42, 221- 225.
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HOW DOES OUR SEXUALITY CHANGE AS WE AGE?

Young men and women often find that although the physical aspects of their sexuality are strong, they **have difficulty with duration and frequency of desire**. Research has shown that the typical young male sexual cycle builds and climaxes quickly, while a women's sexual arousal tends to build more slowly. Additionally, young male sexuality tends to be more physically based, while women want more of a mental connection during their lovemaking. **As we age**, however, the relationship aspects of our sexuality often become a more important part of our sexual expression. As physical



sexuality changes, **couples** can **explore new ways to stimulate each other** by being more intentional about creating a romantic atmosphere for lovemaking with candles, romantic music, sensual massages etc. They may wish to explore new aspects of their sexuality through erotic reading, sex toys, or videos. For couples with families, the later years provide the time and freedom to cultivate "**love nests**" something

that might not have been possible in a house ruled by young children, carpools, sports schedules and the many other demands of raising a family.

Being informed about the normal changes of aging and the many options for supporting our sexuality is much easier than it was a generation ago. Also, more middle-aged and older adults feel freer to discuss sexuality with their friends and learn from and support each other. **Openly discussing your sexual needs and desires**, particularly with your spouse or partner, becomes even **more important as you age**. Several physiological changes of aging can affect your sexuality, as outlined below.

Women

The major changes that women experience during midlife are related to diminishing hormonal production. This accounts for the symptoms of peri-menopause (the time when monthly periods begin to change) and menopause (after monthly periods cease) experienced by many women. Common symptoms include:

- Lower libido and/or slowing of sexual arousal
- Hot flashes and/or night sweats

- Sleep disturbances
- Emotional changes such as irritability, mood swings or depression
- Vaginal dryness and itching
- Increased sensitivity to sounds
- Dry skin
- Weight gain and/or food cravings

Men

Men often find that it takes them longer to have an erection as they get older. They also find that their erection doesn't last as long, and that it takes longer for them to have another erection once they climax. Men who do not know that this is normal become overly concerned, leading to even more "difficulties" from the increased anxiety. If you are having trouble maintaining your erection, you are not alone. It is estimated that 5% of 40-year-old men and 15-25% of 65-year-old men are experiencing erectile dysfunction.

To explore solutions, it is important to not only talk openly with your partner, but also to seek help from your health care provider. A physical exam and lab tests can help pinpoint the cause of your erectile difficulty, and help determine the best way to help.

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BRIEF INTRO OF EPILEPSY

Epilepsy is defined as having recurrent seizures (sometimes called fits). A seizure is caused by a sudden burst of excess electrical activity in the brain, causing a temporary disruption in the normal message passing between brain cells. This disruption results

in the brain's messages becoming halted or mixed up.

The brain is responsible for all the functions of your body, so what you experience during a seizure will depend on where in your brain the epileptic activity begins and

how widely and rapidly it spreads. For this reason, there are many different types of seizure and each person will experience epilepsy in a way that is unique to them.

Sometimes the reason epilepsy develops is clear. It could be because of brain damage caused by a difficult birth;

6 HELPFUL ATTITUDE TIPS FOR YOUR JOB SEARCH

- **Be Attentive:** ask yourself what makes you happy or is fulfilling to you and be attentive to the things you really enjoy doing because they could be helpful.
- **Look for Clues:** Reflect on stories of people you admire. Notice problems that excite your imagination.
- **Be Open:** Rather than laugh at yourself for having ambitious ideas, consider them as real possibilities.
- **Be Patient:** Remember that your search may take some time and you might have to go down a few different roads before finding the right one. Start wherever you can!
- **Be Creative:** Imagine several different scenarios of satisfying work.
- **Be Persistent:** Keep all these tips in mind and only stop when you are satisfied with what you have for yourself.

After you begin to get strong hints about your desires, assess current practical realities. How much money do you really need and/or want to earn from a job? Are you willing to move, or do you need a job that requires minimal commute? Are you willing to go back to school and if so, for how long and under what terms?

CHOICES
Psychotherapy & Self Development Institute

We help children, adolescents, adults, couples and families facing a range of difficulties and life challenges.

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CONTINUED: BRIEF INTRO OF EPILEPSY

a severe blow to the head; a stroke which starves the brain of oxygen; or an infection of the brain such as meningitis. Very occasionally the cause is a brain tumour. Epilepsy with a known cause is called 'symptomatic' epilepsy. For most people - six out of ten, in fact - there is no known cause and this is called 'idiopathic' epilepsy.

There is no conclusive test for epilepsy, although tests such as the electroencephalogram (EEG) - which records brainwave patterns - can give doctors useful information. Epilepsy should be diagnosed by a doctor with specialist training in epilepsy. An epilepsy specialist will use their own expert knowledge, along with test results and the patient's or wit-

ness's accounts of the seizures, to make the diagnosis.

Because epilepsy is currently defined as the tendency to have recurrent seizures, it is unusual to be diagnosed with epilepsy after only one seizure. In the UK around one in 20 people will have a single seizure at some point in their life, whereas one in 131



people have epilepsy.

At the moment there is no cure for epilepsy. However, with the right type and dosage of anti-

epileptic medication, about 70 per cent of people with epilepsy could have their seizures completely controlled.

Stress can also affect seizure frequency and quality of life. Consulting a counselor or behavior therapist can be helpful in clarifying underlying core psychological issues that could be at the origin of triggering more seizures; and can also be helpful in learning healthier life management skills.

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