

Optimal Performance and Sleep: The Perfect Balance



Aggies, and college students in general, are the some of the most sleep deprived individuals for a number of reasons, the biggest being prioritizing studying, sports and social gatherings to getting their long lost zzzs. It's common sense that good sleep results in so many things we want: calm mood, appearance, ability to concentrate, academic performance, personal resiliency (both physical and emotional), and immunity to illnesses. Many of us aren't ready to make sleep a priority simply because we don't understand how devastating sleep loss can be to our performance.

Here's what happens when you have sleep dept:

Daytime drowsiness:	you have a hard time getting through the day without a loss of energy
Microsleeps:	brief episodes of sleep, producing inattention which can result in accidents or death
Depression/irritability:	mood is first to go; your threshold for managing anger is lowered
Stress, anxiety:	increase in worry, frustration, nervousness when under pressure
Withdrawal from others:	because you feel so tired
Weight gain:	in an attempt to stay awake, you may eat foods containing high in sugar
Reduced immunity:	because reduced slow wave sleep has diminished production natural immune system modulators
Loss of motivation:	no energy
Reduced productivity:	diminished quality of mental performance

One hour of sleep loss every night for an entire week is equal to having pulled an "all-nighter". You have to pay your sleep dept by getting more sleep. It takes effort but establishing a good schedule can help you get better sleep and feel better when you are awake. Sleep prepares the body and mind for peak performance. You can create the balance if you recognize the relationship between sleep and performance. So, how do you create this balance? Follow the golden rules of sleep!

The Four Golden Rules of Sleep

1. Get an adequate amount of sleep every night (if you need an alarm, if you can't get out of bed, or if your tired during the day, you haven't gotten enough sleep)
2. Establish a regular sleep schedule
3. Get continuous sleep
4. Make up for lost sleep by going to be earlier

If you want to reach your potential by being creative, alert, making good decisions, and having effective memory retention and recall then follow these rules for the best sleep possible.

Information adapted from Dr. James Maas' book "Power Sleep", Dr. Dement's book "The Promise of Sleep", National Sleep Foundation website, and Cornell University's Gannett Health Services website.

