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Monday Morning

The alarm clock goes off and you realize its Monday morning. If you are like most people who have a typical Monday through Friday workweek, this is the most difficult morning to climb out of bed. You just want to sleep longer.

It is well documented that we have become a nation of sleep-deprived individuals, and the associated costs are staggering... 200,000 auto accidents annually, billions of dollars in lost productivity, compromised student performance, increased appetite for energy-dense foods, and poorer health!

We incorrectly assume that adults can adapt to getting too little sleep. In fact, cognitive function declines after being awake for 16 hours. After 24 hours without sleep, psychomotor function is similar to a blood alcohol level of .08 (most common legal definition of intoxication). Even getting only one hour less sleep per night than needed (8 hours for the average adult) creates sleep debt, an ongoing state of sleep deprivation.

There's nothing like a good night's sleep on a regular basis, because there's no substitute for sleep. Although caffeine can help temporarily reduce the effects of sleep deprivation, it doesn't eliminate sleep debt.

Now back to Monday mornings. The common pattern is that individuals accumulate sleep debt during the work week. We then tend to stay up later on weekend nights, and sleep later on weekend mornings to get more sleep. The problem is that

sleeping later, even by one hour for two consecutive days, alters one's internal biological clock. The result is that it is harder to fall asleep at the usual bedtime on Sunday night, and the 6:00 AM alarm on Monday morning is more like 4:00 AM to one's internal clock. And the vicious cycle of workweek sleep debt has already begun again.

The solutions are simple, but unfortunately hard to implement. The best solution is to get about 8 hours of sleep every night to avoid sleep deprivation and debt. The other solution is to maintain the same wake-up time on the weekends, but get more weekend sleep by going to bed earlier (rather than sleeping later). Maintaining the same wake-up time eliminates the "internal clock shift" that makes Monday mornings so difficult. These are effective ways to have good mornings on Mondays!

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