

The Value of a Good Sleep

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With Daylight Savings Time upon us, you may be keenly feeling the loss of that hour from Saturday night. You wouldn't be the first to feel it either. Human sleep schedules have been profoundly altered by the advent of electric lighting in the late nineteenth century. In contrast to today's sleep habits, several fascinating studies both digging into historical documents and running current experiments show that for much of recorded history the norm was to have two separate sleep periods at night. Neuroscientists have been able to show that having electric lights has impacted how our biorhythms set up our sleeping patterns. Nowadays we talk about the impact of screen technology as well. Blue light, visible light in the wavelengths that our eyes interpret as blue, is produced by televisions, smartphones, and tablets. When our eyes receive this artificial blue light, it inhibits the production of chemicals in the brain that help us know it is time to sleep.

There are also still a lot of questions about sleep itself! We know some things about how sleep happens and what happens to our bodies when we sleep. We know the negative physical and mental health impacts of not enough sleep. We still don't know why we sleep though. If you're curious to learn more about sleep, looking for something to improve your own sleep, or looking for something at bedtime to give your eyes time to adjust away from the screen, here are some great books on sleep here at the library.

Why We Sleep: Unlocking the Power of Sleep and Dreams by Matthew Walker (612.821 Walker) is a great book about the mechanics and benefits of sleep. Walker is the Director of the UC Berkeley Sleep Center, and his in-depth knowledge presents a fascinating dive into previous experiments and studies that have informed our current understanding. He also discusses common sleep problems as well as some solutions. Finally, he goes over what we understand about the benefits and processes of dreaming.

If you're looking for a more hands on guide, you can try Diane Macedo's *The Sleep Fix: Practical, Proven, and Surprising Solutions for Insomnia, Snoring, Shift work, and more* (616.8498 Macedo). Macedo is a former news anchor who suffered from insomnia. She recounts her personal experience learning more about how sleep works and what to do when sleep just won't come. Her book includes lots of great information on the real reasons we have difficulty falling asleep and what you can do about it. You could also try Shawn Stevenson's *Sleep Smarter: 21 Essential Strategies to Sleep Your Way to a Better Body, Better Health, and Bigger Success* (613.794 Stevens). Stevenson recounts his journey to better health from his teenage years struggling with a degenerative bone disease to how meaningful sleep transformed his life for the better.

If there is a child in your life who is having difficulty sleeping, we have a variety of sleep themed picture books that include imagery, pacing, and word choice to help soothe and settle. Our staff in the Children's Room would be happy to help you find some! If you're looking for more information to help you help a child, you can try *The Happiest Baby*

Guide to Great Sleep: Simple Solutions for Kids from Birth to 5 Years by Harvey Karp (649.122 Karp). It goes over some great strategies to help small children get the critical rest they need.

These are just some samples of the great selections we have at the library to help you learn about or improve your sleep. We'd be happy to help you find credible online resources as well! If nothing else, we have some pretty great seating spots for napping too. We hope you are taking care of yourself and encouraging your loved ones to do the same. We love seeing you in the library, and we hope we'll see you again soon.

The library is located at 17 N. Broadway and is open to the public Monday to Thursday 9:30 a.m.-8 p.m. and Friday and Saturday 9:30 a.m.-5 p.m.