Rest: Self Care and Restorative Sleep

"Cradle me in your soul's half-moon, so I can sleep tonight."- Angie Weiland Crosby

What Kind of Self-Care is Right for You?

What is self-care? Most people think of going to the spa or some other form of luxury, but in simple words it is taking care of yourself. Giving yourself time to do activities that nourish you physically, emotionally and for some, spiritually. Self-care doesn't have to cost money, there are many forms of self-care that you can do at or near your home. Examples of self-care are: reading a book, watching the clouds go by, listening to a meditation or visualisation, connect with friends and family, getting in touch with the nature around us, participate in a sport, or begin a morning ritual of dry brushing and moisturizing your body. What isn't self-care: endless phone scrolling or binge-watching Netflix.   Don't feel that self-care is something you don't deserve or is an indulgence. Unless we can take care of ourselves, how can we take care of others?

Does It Really Matter When We Sleep?

Although for most people getting 7-8 hours is sufficient sleep for our bodies, the key to beneficial rest is *when*. Increasingly scientists believe that 22.00-2.00 is the window for our deepest and most restorative sleep. After that our sleep cycle becomes less intense and we may become more likely to wake up. So what happens between 22-2? Cortisol, the stress or "fight and flight" hormone is at its lowest around 22.00. 1-2 hours after sunset, our bodies begin to produce more melatonin, what many call the "feel good" hormone responsible for regulating our sleep. Missing out on melatonin at its peak not only makes it more difficult to get to sleep, we miss out on its ability to repair damage from free radicals caused by stress. If you currently go to bed closer to or after midnight, try getting to sleep 15 minutes earlier each week—even 11.00 is better than midnight.

Tips for a Good Night's Sleep

1. We spend approximately 1/3 of our life in bed so make it comfortable! Invest in quality bed linens, mattress or mattress topper. Clear out the clutter!
2. Create a bedtime ritual an hour before you go to sleep, such as taking a shower or bath, practicing mindfulness, or doing some gentle stretching.
3. Watch the sunset.
4. Stop eating and drinking 2-3 hours before you sleep. Enjoy a cup of soothing herbal tea after dinner, but be sure to give it time to get through your system (at least 90 minutes).
5. Cut the light—don't forget to turn off the phone at least 30-60 minutes before sleep (better yet leave it in another room), keep laptops and TVs out of the bedroom, and avoid digital clocks giving off light. If you live in a small apartment and can't keep the laptop or TV out of the room, at least be sure to shut them down.
6. Place a lavender sachet under the pillow or consider aromatherapy.
7. Keep the room temperature cool, between 16-19C is ideal.

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