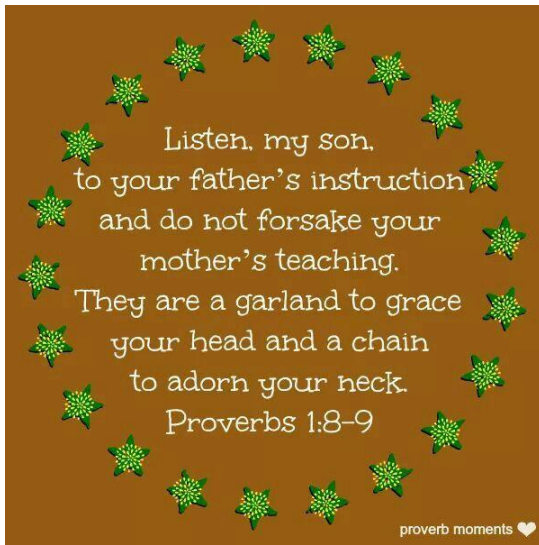


From the Desk of the Executive Head...

5-11-2021

Dear PEPPS Community



Respect is such an important virtue and humility reveals our willingness to learn.

We are reminded in Proverbs 1:8-9 that we should not forget the lessons taught to us by our parents. It is from these lessons that we gain wisdom.

Simultaneously, we must be willing to learn new things. The world is fast-changing and new developments and discoveries are presented every day.

My last newsletter spoke about **creating emotional safe spaces for our children in our homes**. This is something that I shall reinforce time and time again.

It is possible that we were not raised with compassion and understanding of our developmental needs. We cannot change the past, we can only adjust our sails and make the future brighter for our children. Science and society have shown us that **trauma and pain do NOT set children up for success** in schooling or in later life. **Belonging and security in childhood have been correlated to better immediate and long term benefits for children.**

Education is also evolving. The way that many of our generation was taught was through fear and a demand for memorisation. Modern research clearly shows **that pupils fare better in a classroom where their opinions are considered and valued. They thrive in a space where they are spoken to with respect and the educational journey is encouraged with kindness.**

So let us not forsake the teachings of old, especially when it comes to ethical values. That said, let us remain open to new ideas and methodologies which better serve humanity.

PEPPS works very hard at being progressive while remaining personable and interactive. We are extremely grateful to the Limpopo community for once again recognising us in the PMR survey. In 2021 **we achieved a Gold Arrow Award in the Category Best Private School**. We know that it is by God's Grace that PEPPS remains blessed and we find favour with those who we serve. **It is our privilege and pleasure to add value to children and their families in Limpopo. Thank you for your continued support.**

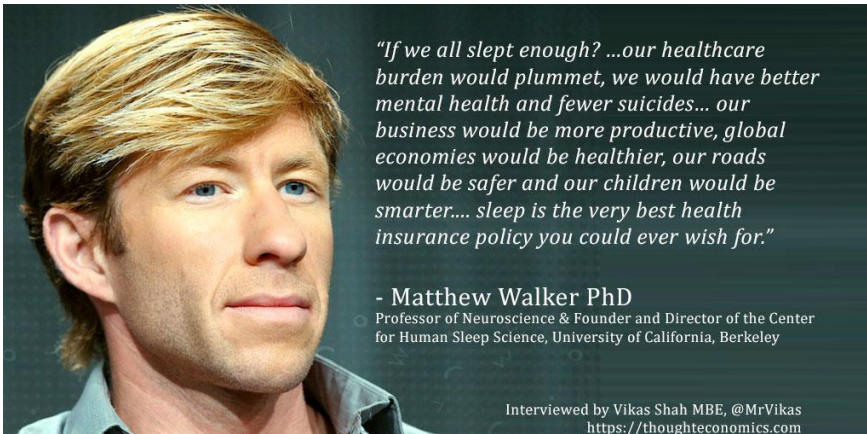


Over the last week, I attended an online Well-being Conference hosted by TecMilenio University in Mexico. The speakers were all authorities in their fields and many were published authors. The clear, well-researched truth is that **well-being is achieved through conscious endeavour**. We have to work at it. Interestingly, **gratitude improves well-being** and the **materialism of our modern world creates stress and compromises immunity**.

It was also, once again clear, that our children need to be in an **emotionally regulated environment, and experience love around them, to optimally thrive**. I have written at length on these subjects and it is interesting to see that scientific study after scientific study reinforces this truth.

Ultimately, we all want to see our children happy. We send them to school hoping that they will be well-educated and realise academic success. This academic success will be the platform from which they will be empowered to further their education and go on to live full, happy and meaningful lives in which they **contribute effectively to the betterment of society**.

If we wish to optimise learning, we need to prioritise sleep in our homes.



"If we all slept enough? ...our healthcare burden would plummet, we would have better mental health and fewer suicides... our business would be more productive, global economies would be healthier, our roads would be safer and our children would be smarter.... sleep is the very best health insurance policy you could ever wish for."

- Matthew Walker PhD
Professor of Neuroscience & Founder and Director of the Center for Human Sleep Science, University of California, Berkeley

Interviewed by Vikas Shah MBE, @MrVikas
<https://thoughteconomics.com>

Dr Matthew Walker has written a book called 'Why We Sleep' which is an enlightening treasure trove of information about the benefits of sleep and how modernity works against effective sleep.

Below is a link to a Google Talk interview with Matthew Walker. It is nearly an hour long, but incredibly interesting.

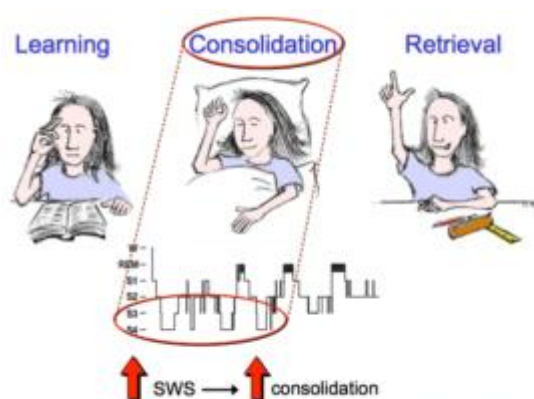
https://youtu.be/c1yGw_hfEfK

Although there are dozens of benefits of good sleep and many significant problems that result from poor sleep, **I am going to focus on sleep's role in learning.**

In our hustle-bustle modern world, we have glorified over-working and we have diminished the importance of sleep. People who sleep a lot are often considered lazy or weak. People proudly declare that they can get by on 5-6 hours of sleep per night and staying up all night to study is seen as a metaphorical badge-of-honour among senior pupils in the College.

These patterns are destructive to learning in the extreme.

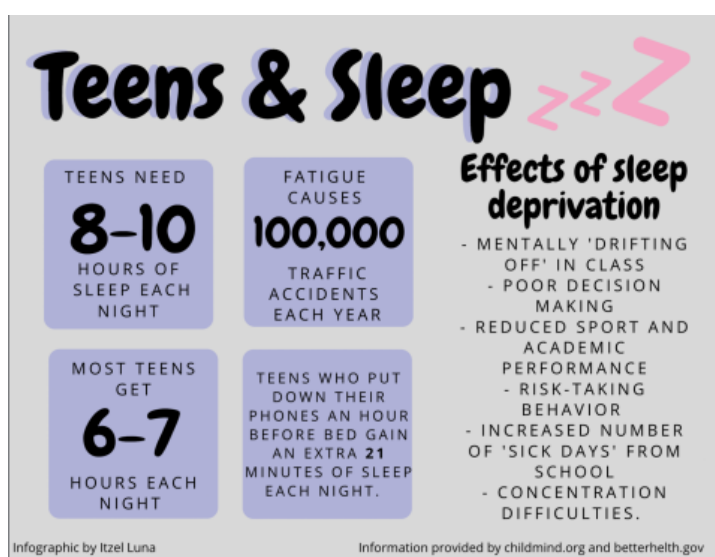
- In order to effectively learn (place information permanently into our brains) our brain has to be well-rested.
- In order to save information in our brain (memorise information), we have to sleep for long enough to process all of the information presented during the day.
- Finally, in order to retrieve information from our brains (write a test or exam), we have to be fully alert.



Boosting SWS boosts memory! – Marshall et al. Nature (2005)

<https://rablogspot.com/sleep-and-learning/>

The above needs are only met if we sleep well. Our children have to sleep well in order to learn optimally.



Setting up bedtime routines in our homes to allow 3-6-year-olds about 10 hours of sleep, 7-12-year-olds about 9 hours of sleep, and 13-19-year-olds around 8 hours of sleep, is essential. Some children need a little more sleep than this. Almost no children need less sleep than this. As the adults in the house, we have to guide the children towards this goal.

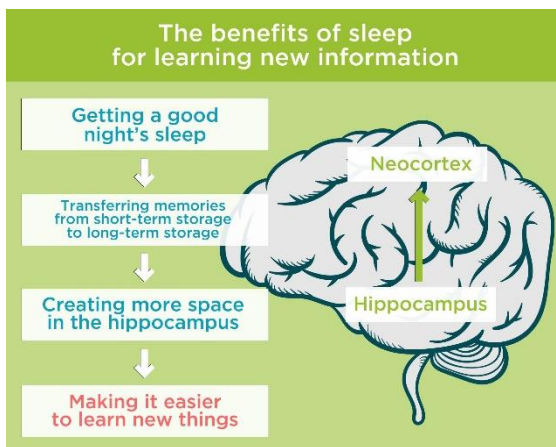
If sleep is to be optimised, **caffeine** (coke, energy drinks, tea and coffee) **should not be consumed after lunchtime, if at all.**

Also, **screens should be removed 1-2 hours before sleep or set to night mode.** Blue light hinders sleep.

Regular sleep times enhance sleep cycles. Midnight waking up to study is counterproductive if maximised learning is our goal. **Without a full 8-10 hours of sleep, children are NOT set up for success in the learning day that follows.**

Bedrooms should be sleep spaces and all devices should be kept away from children during the night. They often do not have the self-control to ignore their phones during the night. As responsible adults, who want to see them flourish, we should help them to get an excellent night of sleep by keeping devices safely away from them.

I have focused on learning and sleep in this newsletter because my role is to optimise learning in our schools.



I must, however, emphasise that sleep has benefits way beyond learning and I encourage us all to look into the damage that we do to ourselves by depriving ourselves of sleep.

I implore parents to ensure that your children sleep well and for long enough so that they learn optimally every day. Scientific research is overwhelmingly in favour of abundant sleep, especially for developing brains.

<https://recharge.energy/en/benefits-of-sleep/>

As we approach 2022, PEPPS is hopeful that we shall offer all extra-curricular activities and enrichment opportunities, over and above our excellent academic program next year. To this end, **we encourage all families to vaccinate.** Vaccinations decrease high-risk Covid and they minimise Covid transmission through a community. They are not perfect, but they make a real difference and are our only hope of returning to 'normal'. We have to change Covid from a life-threatening illness into just another inconvenient cold or flu. A vaccinated community can create that shift.

This final academic month is filled with exams, year-end rituals and prize-givings. Let us approach this time with a desire to **finish off the year strong** and celebrate that every pupil (whether they win an official prize or not) has grown and developed through this year. Each child has learnt and matured and everyone is worthy and wonderful.



Yours in healthy, safe and excellent education

Annabel Roberts

PEPPS Executive Head