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How Camping Will Fix Your Internal Clock

AUGUST 02ND 2013 BY BETH FARRAH

How Camping Will Fix Your Internal Clock

Have you been having trouble sleeping? Studies have shown that a popular summer pastime could help fix that problem. Fox News recently conducted research on the human sleep wake cycle, which is the sleeping cycle of the human body and its natural “internal clock”.

In our fast-moving and busy lives, giving up a couple hours of sleep each night seems like an easy thing to do, especially when you might have a warm cup of coffee waiting for you once you wake up the next morning. But what we do not realize is that our sleep wake cycles are more mixed up than ever in our neatly scheduled lives.

Fox News and the online journal entitled *Current Biology* recently came to the conclusion that camping in the great outdoors could help your sleep wake cycle get back on track. The time span for this to occur is five to seven days.

Camping outdoors in a tent gets your body synced with the rising and setting of the sun. Once your body is “trained” on the sun’s cycle, it is an easier task to go to sleep and wake up at a decent time, allowing you and your body to get a better night’s sleep.

Since your eyes will be trained on natural light instead of artificial lights that we use in our houses, your body is more likely to be synced with the sun’s cycle. When the sun sets, our bodies naturally produce melatonin, which is a chemical that makes us tired. When we fall asleep to the TV, the glow of our cell phones or laptops, or any other electronic that produces light, it delays the release of our bodies’ melatonin, which leads to us staying up later than we should.

This study was conducted in Boulder, Colorado, where scientists used eight participants to prove their hypothesis. The eight people were studied for one week throughout their daily lives and activities while the scientists measured their melatonin levels which tend to increase in the evening and fall in the morning. They continued their research as the eight people went camping in Colorado.

To get accurate research, their melatonin levels were still monitored while they were in the wilderness, where they were only exposed to natural sunlight and the glow of their campfires (flashlights and other electronics were not allowed during the study). During their time away in the outdoors, the subjects found that their exposure to the sunlight was four times stronger than the light they come in contact with during their daily routines. The sunlight exposure allowed them to be perfectly in sync with nature and the sun’s schedule.

The subjects and their melatonin levels proved that during their daily routine, they stayed up two hours later than they did during their camping trip. They also since their sleep wake cycle was knocked off track throughout their normal routine, their camping trip and the natural light helped them get back on track so that they woke up naturally with the sun without feeling groggy or sleepy.

"By increasing our exposure to sunlight and reducing our exposure to electrical lighting at night, we can turn our internal clock and sleep times back and likely make it easier to awaken and be alert in the morning." said Kenneth Wright, the leader of the study.

If camping doesn't fit into your summer schedule, try waking up earlier and taking a walk outside after the sun rises or sit outside while you eat your lunch. The more exposure you have to natural light will help your melatonin levels and your "internal clock".

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