

Can night owls lead a healthy life?

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Lately my sleep schedule has been pretty messed up.

Being a night owl, it was always normal for me to stay awake until 3 AM and wake up early to catch the 7 AM bus to attend my 8 AM class. To make up for this sleep deficiency, I would take a 1.5-hour nap in the evening after getting back home, which kept me refreshed and active at night to continue the repetition of the cycle. On the weekends, I would sleep longer to compensate for the overall lack of sleep.

But ever since the university closed due to the pandemic, I stopped sleeping at night entirely and started going to bed early in the morning, thinking that getting plenty of sleep during the day would allow me to continue leading a healthy life. But there was this constant feeling of discomfort which I couldn't shake off, perhaps because sleeping during the day was anything but normal. I was also worried about the long term detrimental effects it might have on my body and so, I decided to investigate.

To my shock, I found from a study that mistimed sleep, such as sleeping during the day may disrupt and alter the rhythms of our gene activities (Archer et al., 2014). Another study suggested that rapid changes in more than 100 proteins in the blood can



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occur if one sleeps during the day even for just one 24-hour period, and over time, these biochemical changes in blood protein levels may put us at a higher risk of being affected with obesity, diabetes, heart disease and even cancer (Depner, Melanson, McHill & Wright, 2018). Therefore, pulling

all-nighters and sleeping during the day is not a good choice, even more so if it's continued for a prolonged period of time.

However, sleep deprivation, a common phenomenon among night owls, is actually more detrimental than sleeping during the day. Researchers have uncovered evidence

indicating that individuals who go to sleep very late and in turn wake up very late tend to have lower brain connectivity and therefore, they are more prone to attention deficit, slower reaction time and increased sleepiness during working hours (Facer-Childs et al., 2019). The traditional 9 to 5 working hours can be tough for the night owl, because the sleep deficit may result in diminished performance during the morning.

But being a night owl isn't all bad, as they tend to be more creative and have higher cognitive abilities because of higher cortisol secretion within their bodies. Night owls have also been found to be risk takers and researchers have found no significant difference in overall performance between night owls and early birds.

New research indicates that resetting the late timing of such individuals has a positive impact on mental health and performance and it is possible to reset our internal biological clock within a week. So, adjusting the sleep routine and maintaining a healthy diet can help night owls to lead a healthy life.

H. Rainak Khan Real is working hard to create a nationwide transmutation circle that can speed up university graduation. Send him help at rainakkhanreal@gmail.com

The Dangers of Parasocial Relationships

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If you're reading this, you're probably a fan of at least one individual in the public eye. If it's an athlete, you watch all of their games. If it's a musician, you listen to their songs on repeat. If it's a social media influencer, you like and comment on all of their Instagram posts.

These activities fall under *parasocial interactions*, a term coined by sociologists Donald Horton and Richard Whorl in 1956 to describe the one-sided relationship between the audience and celebrities with mass media exposure. For example, when famous guests recount anecdotes in a talk show, they're unaware of the millions of viewers watching them. On the other hand, the viewers learn details of their private lives.

When you admire someone, you devote time and interest in doing so because you can relate to their work on a personal level. It's a natural response. In dull and dark moments, these interactions can provide relief. However, if you become too emotionally dependent on someone who isn't even aware of your existence, there's a problem. You have entered the territory of a *parasocial relationship*.

In these relationships, some fans may suffer from the delusion that their favourite celebrities are their friends. As social media has made parasocial interactions more accessible, the gap between the two parties has been reduced. Public figures are able to share intimate details of their lives, and fans can easily interact with them through comments and private messages. Therefore, it has become easy for some fans to cultivate parasocial relationships.

What these fans forget is that they are a largely unknown entity to the figures of their admiration. They also fail to notice that the celebrity image is carefully crafted in order to *seem* authentic, which can never represent one's



entire personality. As a result, delusional fans may feel entitled over their favourite icon's personal lives. If this behaviour deteriorates further, fans might become obsessive and make unreasonable demands that intrude upon their favourite icon's privacy, not limited to stalking. Some fans might put themselves at great risk in order to draw the attention of the person they venerate.

This extreme emotional dependency not only takes a toll on the fan affected, it can also put a strain on their interpersonal relationships. When an obsessive fan gives all of their attention to hero worship, there's hardly anything left for family and friends – relationships that are comparatively more balanced and fulfilling. It might give way to resentment and finally abandonment, leading the fan to become more dependent on the idolised human they obsess over.

Therefore, it's wise to keep in mind in your future parasocial interactions that you don't know your favourite public figure personally, and vice versa – no matter how much you think you connect with them. Save some of that emotional energy for your loved ones; they need it more than your favourite celebrity does. It will do you good in the long run.

References

1. The Verge (September 17, 2018). *YouTubers are not your friends*.
2. Medium.com (May 26, 2017). *YouTube Celebrities Are Killing Our Ability To Make Friends*.

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