



## Jeff Davidson: Breathing Space

### Having a Hard Time Staying Awake?

Recently, the Better Sleep Council commissioned a survey that yielded some rather interesting results. Most notably, they found that out of one thousand adults questioned, one in three admitted that feelings of sleeplessness regularly affect their work. Among the council's other findings:

- Twice as many men as women confessed to dozing at their desks on company time.
- Nearly half of those polled believe that long work hours keep them from getting all of the sleep they need.
- Twenty percent of those polled admitted to calling in sick or being tardy for work because they didn't sleep well the night before.
- One out of three adults say they are not well rested when they wake up for work.

#### Nothing New, but Definitely of Concern

Exhaustion is nothing new, and nothing to take lightly. George Washington, it is said, used to retreat for days if not weeks on end to get precious rest and restore his faculties, while he was President. From NBA basketball coaches, to Michael Jackson, to Fortune 500 CEOs, to the heads of universities, to association executives such as you, everyone needs to be getting the right amount of sleep and proper relaxation is more critical than ever.

In Japan, death from overwork, known as "karoshi," claims 1000's the lives annually. The range is wide because it's not easy to precisely assess the cause of death of so many people slumped over at their desks, unless they all are given autopsies. Karoshi is not a significant phenomenon in America. Nevertheless, among those severely fatigued, heart disease and high blood pressure are quite common.

Okay, so you don't get enough sleep, but why is that potentially dangerous? You respond to stressful situations by working at a higher gear, your heart pumps blood faster, your muscles contract, your arteries narrow and your blood thickens. You're ready for fight or flight. If you did fight or flee, the condition largely would take care of itself. Instead of doing either, your engine is revving for eight, maybe nine, maybe ten hours straight. You get home, and there are potentially more stressors there. You don't sleep as many hours as your body needs, or if you do, it's not very good sleep; it's fitful, with tossing and turning. The net result:

- You're worn down.
- Your immune system is weakened.
- You're much more susceptible to illness.

Some experts believe that getting too little sleep on a consistent basis may undermine your entire being -- impacting your entire life to your detriment. Any illness that you do contract, combined with too little sleep, will be more severe. So, don't wait for illness or an accident. Plot out over the next month, how and when you will start getting the rest your body is currently craving.