

Is Afternoon Fatigue Influencing Your Job Performance?

Millions of Americans have very productive mornings; catching up on emails and voicemails, attending meetings, and completing projects left over from the day before. Then the clock strikes noon, and they head to lunch. Following lunch they return to their offices, often feeling tired, drained, and less-than-productive. While the morning may have been filled with productivity, the afternoon slump has set in and they wonder where their energy went.

Many things can contribute to afternoon fatigue, but being alert can be critical to both your job performance, and your job security. Let's evaluate what causes the afternoon slump, and we can make it become history. Following is the formula that can make the difference.

- What you eat for lunch is important. Following a heavy meal especially, an increased amount of energy will be diverted to the stomach for digestion, leaving less energy for your brain.

- The combination of foods you consume is also important. For example, meat and starches in combination are slow to digest. Then, eating fruit, or drinking fruit juice with a meal, will greatly increase the digestion time as well. Thus, fruit or fruit juice should be consumed at least 30 minutes before, or 2 ½ hours following a meal. Eating a lighter lunch, and chewing thoroughly, speeds up digestion.

- If you are finding it difficult to stay awake at times, and are taking medications, that could very well be your problem. Of the 200 most prescribed medications, 175 (87.5 percent) listed "fatigue" or "drowsiness" as possible side effects!

- Low thyroid (hypothyroid), low blood sugar (hypoglycemia), dehydration, or insufficient oxygen, can all influence your mental capacity, and ability to remain alert. The hypothyroid condition is surprisingly common, as well as the most often misdiagnosed, or improperly treated condition. Your thyroid is rather like your I.Q. There is a range that is considered normal, although borderline-low is still considered as acceptable by most doctors. Your thyroid function influences how efficiently food is metabolized, and oxygen is utilized. The most common symptoms associated with a hypothyroid condition are: fatigue, depression, and inability to concentrate, all critical to our performance.

- Anemia, caused by insufficient red blood cells, is one well-known contributor to fatigue. Anemia can result from a low thyroid condition, as well as a deficiency of vitamin B₁₂ or folic acid. And of the 180 most commonly prescribed medications, 61 percent depleted folic acid, 70 percent depleted vitamin B₁₂ and the majority actually depleted both!

- Taking a high-potency vitamin B-complex such as B-100, along with 50 mg of Coenzyme Q₁₀, twice daily, (upon rising and at noon), can help maintain your energy level, and prevent fatigue throughout the day.

Getting Adequate Sleep Is Critical

Insufficient sleep is a concern for every employee, as it can lead to industrial accidents, or work-related errors. Adequate sleep plays an important part regarding efficient retention and recall. During sleep, the demand for our resources is greatly reduced, allowing healing and regeneration to take place. Thus we will be healthier, and more productive, if we get adequate sleep. Surprising as it might seem, you won't accomplish more by sleeping fewer hours, as you will actually be less productive during the day.

The influence sleep deprivation might have on you as an employee could vary, depending on your particular profession, and position. For example, it is especially critical for any manager, whose communication skills are important in order to adequately motivate employees, and help maintain their job satisfaction. Employee turnover, and re-training, is something every company should attempt to keep to a minimum.

Then, if insomnia is a problem, try avoiding diet sodas containing aspartame (NutraSweet™ or Equal™), as they can block the formation of melatonin and serotonin, contributing to both insomnia and depression. Some people drink alcohol to relax in the evening. Although they may fall asleep easily, they don't stay asleep, and normally wake up between 2 and 4 a.m. Excessive alcohol or drugs, such as Valium™, or SSRI antidepressants such as Prozac, completely inhibit the important REM sleep, when the most regeneration takes place. Some people claim that tobacco calms them down, although nicotine actually mimics the effects of adrenaline, promoting insomnia. Hunger can definitely disturb your restorative sleep, (especially a concern with hypoglycemics). A protein snack before retiring should help. Taking 6 mg of melatonin before going to sleep increases your chances of getting a good night's rest.

Attitude Makes All The Difference!

Your attitude plays an important role in developing job satisfaction. Nothing contributes to drowsiness faster than boredom, which can often be eliminated with a minor attitude adjustment. You might consider striving to become Employee of the Month – every single month. And avoid stress whenever possible. If you feel you are in hyper-drive, and thus have difficulty focusing, try taking the amino acid L-theanine, made from green tea. It stimulates the calming amino acid GABA in the brain, and produces the more mentally productive alpha waves, which helps you stay focused. L-theanine is especially beneficial for a Type-A individual, or anyone working at a stressful job.

It might help to pretend that you are a silent partner, as your motivation and performance plays an important part in your company's success, and your job security. Always have a cheerful up-beat attitude, and be a team player. It's amazing how rapidly time passes when you develop the proper attitude. If you are required to spend time away from home, you might as well make sure it's quality time.

This is the kind of individual every manager is looking for. And when it comes to advancement, they are the first to be considered, and the last they would want to lose when laying off employees due to downsizing.

By incorporating the above recommendations, your afternoons can be every bit as productive as your mornings, and rather than "crashing" after work, you can finally spend quality time with your friends or family as well.