

Short Night's Sleep? Here Are 6 Tips To Help You Make It Through The Day

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You barely slept at all last night, but playing hooky (from your job, from your family, from your life) today just isn't an option. Here's how to fake it until you make it until bedtime.

1. The first time you hit the snooze button, turn on the lights as well. This will cue your brain that is time to wake up. Better yet, open up any curtains or shades to let in natural light. If you get depressed during the winter or just can't wake up, get a "light box" made for seasonal affective disorder and put it on a timer by your bed.

2. Wake up and smell the coffee — or the tea. It's okay to put your coffee machine on a timer. The smell of coffee is a powerful cue for our minds that it is time to wake up. Then have a cup. Or 2.

Think the coffee or tea is a vice? Think again! A study of over 400,000 people conducted by researchers at the National Cancer Institute found that people who drank 3 to 4 cups of coffee a day reduced their risk of early death by 12-13 percent compared to folks who didn't drink coffee, with fewer deaths from heart disease, stroke, injuries and accidents, and diabetes. Like tea, coffee is plant based and chock full of antioxidants. I would keep it to 1-2 cups a day, and switch to decaf if having more. Meanwhile tea lowers heart attack and Alzheimer's risk and even lowers cholesterol.

3. Don't like tea or coffee? Have some chocolate. This

contains theobromine, another natural stimulant, and eating a small amount of chocolate each day is healthy. It is not low-calorie though, so go for quality over quantity. Researchers from the University of Cambridge analyzed 7 studies on chocolate and heart health, involving more than 114,000 people. Compared to those who ate the least chocolate, those who ate the most had a 37 percent reduced rate of any type of cardiovascular disease (angina, heart attack, heart failure) and a 29 percent reduced risk of stroke. The chocolate lovers also had a 50 percent lower risk of dying from heart disease, and a 35 percent lower risk of developing diabetes. This makes eating a little chocolate way more effective at prolonging your life than medications — and a lot tastier

4. Now that you have stepped on the gas pedal with the caffeine, be sure to also put some fuel in your gas tank. Otherwise, you may spend the day running on fumes. Do this by having a breakfast high in complex carbohydrates, such as a whole grain cereal. The complex carbs will give you sustained energy throughout the morning. Skip the fruit juices though. That 16 ounces of OJ packs a whopping 12 spoons of sugar, which will leave your energy taking a nosedive about an hour later. Meanwhile, throw some berries onto your whole grain cereal or eat a whole fruit for some quick healthy energy.

5. In addition, B vitamins,

magnesium, and many other nutrients are critical for making energy. Instead of reaching for an "energy loan shark" drink loaded with sugar, drink a good vitamin powder mix instead. Want to turbo charge your energy? Our recently published study showed that adding a special nutrient called ribose increased energy an astounding average of 61 percent after 3 weeks. I throw a 5 gram scoop into my vitamin powder each morning, and that 30 seconds can leave you flying high all day with healthy energy.

6. Feeling an energy slump as the day goes on? Get up and stretch and drink 8 to 12 ounces of cold water. You'll be surprised at how your energy picks up as you treat the dehydration. Can't leave your desk? Rub your ears. This will give you a quick energy burst as all of the acupuncture meridians reflect on your ears.

Below is a mock scenario that gives a minute-by-minute look at a typical sleep deprived morning:

7 a.m. — Get up when your alarm goes off. The worst mistake sleep-deprived insomnia patients make is staying in bed in the morning to try to reach the magic eight hours. Sleeping later than normal throws your body off schedule and will make it harder to fall asleep tonight, perpetuating the problem. No matter how tempting it feels to huddle under the blankets, your body won't react well to a snooze-in.

7:10 a.m. — Go out on the balcony, the deck or the porch. Natural light calibrates your body's clock for



the rest of the day. Bright natural sunshine is the strongest and therefore the best, but it's not always easy to find. Bring the sun indoors by turning on all of your lamps, and consider getting a light box that has a couple hundred lux for the dark days of winter, or if you need to consistently get up before the sun.

7:30 a.m. — Sip coffee or sniff it. Caffeine temporarily interferes with the chemical signals of sleepiness, so we feel more alert. Not a coffee drinker? Simply breathe in the scent of your spouse's, roommate's or cube-mate's

brew. Just the aroma of coffee beans can alter the activity of genes in the brain to reduce the stress of sleep deprivation, found Korean researchers working with exhausted rodents.

7:45 a.m. — Rehydrate and refuel. Most of us wake up dehydrated, which adds to our feelings of fatigue-yet few of us remember to drink a glass of water upon rising. Another habit that will make you feel more alert and boost your cognitive performance is eating breakfast within an hour or so of waking. Any kind of early meal will help, but steel-cut oatmeal is one

of your best bets, thanks to complex carbs, which give a slow, steady dose of energy (add raisins-i.e., simple sugar-for the quick surge).

10 a.m.—Consider another cup of coffee. Java junkies can handle about 400 mg of caffeine per day. Just beware of getting more than 500 mg, which, like sleep deprivation can lead to nervousness and irritability. Also try to drink your last cup before late afternoon so as not to throw off tonight's sleep.