

## I'll Sleep When I'm Dead

Throughout law school and my early days practicing law, I burned the candle at both ends. When I felt tired I would say "I'll sleep when I'm dead." For years I averaged five-six hours of sleep per night. I even pulled my share of all-nighters studying and preparing for trials. I would then wear my sleep deprivation as a badge of honor as I drank a Big Gulp size cup of coffee.

After my cup of coffee, I felt fine. Even if I didn't feel fine, there was no time to waste sleeping because I had important stuff to do. At least that's what I told myself.

What about you? Are you sleep-deprived? As a lawyer chances are pretty good that you are. The mattress chain Sleepy's analyzed the results of a National Health Interview Survey in 2012 and found that lawyers rank second on a list of the most-sleep deprived professions. Here's the top five most sleep deprived professions: (1) Home Health Aides, averaging six hours and fifty-seven minutes; (2) Lawyers, averaging seven hours; (3) Police Officers, averaging seven hours and one minute; (4) Physicians and Paramedics, averaging seven hours and two minutes; and (5) A tie between Economists, Social Workers, and Computer Programmers, averaging seven hours and three minutes.

According to the survey, lawyers average seven hours of sleep per night. Raise your hand if you average at least seven hours of sleep. (Come on, no one is watching...raise your hand!) It doesn't look like many of you are raising your hands. Okay, I can't see if you're raising your hand or not but if you're anything like my attorney clients and the other attorneys I speak with, seven hours of sleep is a luxury. If you can get that many hours of sleep on a Saturday or Sunday it's a cause for celebration!

I was the same way until I started studying high performance and learned the damaging and harmful effects of sleep deprivation. According to the National Sleep Foundation, being awake for 18 hours straight is like driving with a blood alcohol level of .05 (.08 is considered drunk). And after you've pulled an all-nighter and have been awake for 24 hours, it's like having a blood alcohol level of .10.

Other serious side effects of sleep loss include deteriorating cognitive performance including decreased attention, alertness, concentration, reasoning, and problem-solving (that "brain fog" feeling); increased risk for heart disease, heart attack, heart failure, high blood pressure, stroke, and diabetes; decreased sex drive; forgetfulness; weight gain; increased risk of death from all causes; and impaired judgment.<sup>[1]</sup>

Those were more than enough harmful side effects to scare me into getting more sleep. Now I average about eight hours per night. What about you? Are you ready to get more sleep?

I follow the gold standard eight-hour rule<sup>[2]</sup> which is the same number of hours recommended by retired Navy SEAL Kirk Parsley, MD.<sup>[3]</sup> Dr. Parsley has worked with some of the most elite performers on the planet including world-class athletes, professional sports teams, fortune 100 CEOs, and the Navy SEALs. He reports that one trait they all have in common is that they all perform better with sleep. A second trait they had in common was the initial belief that sleep was optional and did not affect their performance. (Sound familiar?) After working with Dr. Parsley they realized that lack of sleep WAS affecting their performance.

To help these elite performers improve their performance he gave them a 7-Day Sleep Challenge.<sup>[4]</sup> I'm going to take the challenge and I invite you to do so as well, here it is:

For seven days black-out your room, turn off your television and digital devices at least an hour or two before bed, and go to bed at the same time every night. If you're going to read before bed do it in another room. Then use a breathing exercise, meditation, or visualization to help initiate sleep.

Set a goal of eight hours sleep per night and let me know what you discover about yourself and your performance. If you have any questions send me an email at [brian@attorneyrevolution.com](mailto:brian@attorneyrevolution.com).

[1] Peri, Camille. Reviewed by James Beckerman, MD, FACC (2014, February 13) *10 things to Hate About Sleep Loss*. Retrieved from <https://www.webmd.com>

[2] Some studies have questioned the eight hour rule so the best way to figure out the optimal number of hours of sleep for you is to listen to your body and keep a sleep journal to measure your results.

[3] Dr. Parsely has been a member of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine since 2006 and has served as Naval Special Warfare's expert on Sleep Medicine.

[4] Parsley MD, Kirk. (2018, March 19) *Sleep your way to optimal performance in just 7 days*. Retrieved from <https://www.docparsely.com>

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