

Sleep Plans

Leaders need to learn to sleep while traveling and they need to be strong enough to enforce sleep plans on their subordinates otherwise chaos will rule the mission. The less sleep leaders get the less they are able to forecast or plan into the future. It normally takes about 6-8 hours of sleep nightly to be able to plan 2-3 weeks into the future. Sleeping is a leadership driven event!

- For low level leaders 4-6 hours of sleep is required. They are able to forecast or plan at least 2-3 days into the future, but will not be able to forecast out any further.
- For "foot soldiers" or "worker bees" they need 2-4 hours of sleep daily. At this level they will only be able to focus on the "here and now" as nothing else makes sense to them. Here's the warning: They can only work at this level for about 7-14 days before they hit their body's breaking point. The better their personal fitness level is the longer they can last at this high level of energy. But when they do crash and they will, they will be non-functional for a day or two at best.
- For anyone getting less than 1-2 hours of sleep per day for 7-14 days, they run the risk of having a psychotic episode, which normally lands people in the hospital for days or weeks. I've seen this and it's not good for the victim, their family or the organization. It mostly means there was a leadership failure and worker bee maturity failure.
- Warning signs for lack of sleep will remind you of a 5 year old who's exhausted and playing really rough, so look for signs like:
 - Non-stop talking, talking very loudly, and rambling on about nothing.
 - Hysterical laughing.
 - 1,000 Yard Stare, where their eyes don't seem to focus.
 - Violent outbursts or odd physical confrontations.
 - Constantly doing something, but getting nothing accomplished.
 - Unable to follow simple commands without going off task.
 - Loss of logical action, like unable to tie shoes or losing important equipment.
 - Loss of balance leading to falling down.
 - Extremely unsafe acts like jumping off a roof or driving way to fast.
 - Having to start over on mental or manual tasks.

2. Quality of sleep:

- This is where practice comes into play. Know how you like to sleep, with one pillow or two, hot or cold, do you need an air mattress, things like this. Sleeping is the most important thing you can do while you're on a mission, so set yourself up for success. An exhausted leader makes bad decisions and exhausted followers cause problems for everybody!
- Know the location's weather and figure out the highs and lows and then plan on 20 degrees less at night in case a storm comes through the area you're in.

- Purchase a Gore-Tex outer bag liner, they will keep you dry, just the Gore-Tex outer bag and a poncho liner will keep you dry and fairly warm.
- 3 in 1 bags are great as they can let you mix and match your warmth level to the mission, most military bags go to zero when completely combined together so they are highly recommended. But they are heavy to tote around.
- Light weight hiker's bags are good, but most are not water proof and they get cold under 50 degrees. So always take a poncho liner and stuff it in your hiker bag for warmth. Then doing things like putting on a fleece jacket, socks and such can get you down to 30 or 40 degrees. Just remember, not to get so hot that you start sweating as sweaty clothing transmits body heat.
- I always carry two poncho liners and a small square pillow in my "Go Bag", I've lived for weeks out of my "Go Bag", just last year and I slept pretty good. (My "Go Bag" is set for 7 days with 10 days' worth of personal medicines.)
- Up until the 3 in 1 bags came out in the military I used a \$20 Dutch Infantry sleeping bag from the 1950's as it was waterproof on the bottom and I put a poncho liner or field jacket (and anything else) inside it for those really cold nights and would cover it with a rain poncho to keep the top dry. Scary thought my main sleeping bag is almost 70 years old, those Dutch are pretty good at making stuff!
- In extreme cold weather situations think outside the box! Tricks I've used to stay warm:
 - Used my ruck sack as a mini-sleeping bag for my feet, make sure you take your boots off but put them in the ruck sack too. Sweaty feet are half way to frostbite!
 - Extra clothing can be used as mini-blankets in your sleeping bag, just remember to not sweat.
 - If several of you have to sleep together put the restless sleepers on the outside.
 - For dry warm clothes, after you take off your clothes put them in the sleeping bag with you, the same for boots. Sweat soaked boots freeze solid and when it's really cold they freeze to the ground too.
 - Always leave yourself an air hole to breathe through no matter how cold it gets, otherwise carbon dioxide can kill you or at the very least give you a severe headache that lasts for about 2 hours.

3. Sitting yourself up for success:

- Plan on sleeping!
- Test your sleep system and make sure you can get a good night's sleep in it.
- Remember the old soldier's phrase "travel lite, freeze at night". Now find a way not to freeze!

- Think dual use items like a towel can also be a pillow, the more flexible your sleep system is the better you sleep at night.
- Waterproof is your friend, but ponchos and poncho liners are family!

4. Self-hypnosis:

- Last time I checked this was still in the Army Field Manual for Continuous Operations, except they didn't call refer to it as self-hypnosis, they just said, "to day dream of peaceful and relaxing things", which is self-hypnosis in a nutshell. Self-hypnosis focuses on you learning to relax through a "Mindful Breathing" technique, basically you clear your mind as you inhale and exhale and force yourself to think of nothing but your breathing. Then you focus on relaxing your entire body starting at your toes and going up to your head. You also pay attention to all the aches and pains you have and focus on relaxing each muscle involved. (I'm a certified hypnotist with a small practice in case you're curious.) Mindful Breathing helps relax you enough so at least your body gets some rest. With practice you can easily fall asleep at this point by thinking of the same thing over and over again. Like counting sheep or whatever, as long as it is soothing and relaxing to you.

5. Medicines:

- Over the counter medicines: They can work for a short time, but before you take them think about why you are taking them and how life will be for you after the mission is over.
- Under the counter medicines: If you're having trouble sleeping and need medicine, have a serious talk with your doctor about what is going on with you. Sleep apnea and the stress of travel can easily kill you so if you've been diagnosed with sleep apnea see your doctor to make sure it is safe for you to live and work in a stressful environment.

6. Alcohol:

- May make you drowsy at first but it keeps you from getting a deep level of sleep. One U.S. Navy study reported that for every drink of hard liquor or for every beer (can or bottle) consumed the person lost 10% of their physical and mental function for the next 48 hours. So a person drinking five beers in one day would only be 50% functional for two days. Now many will argue with this, but I'm going with the U.S. Navy on this one.
 - Consider the loss of deep sleep.
 - The dehydration as the body uses water to rid the body of alcohol, which is a poison.
 - The stomach problems related to being hung over (vomiting, diarrhea).
 - Muscle cramps, shakiness, and loss of dexterity from dehydration.
 - Loss of acute vision function.
 - Loss of hearing from dehydration.
 - Headache from dehydration, which impairs the processing ability of the brain.