Program: *Sending zzzzz’s your way*

Audience: undergraduate students in residence halls (intended to be an RA program)

Time: preferably 8:30-9:30pm

Purpose: To identify natural remedies to calm after a stressful day and prepare your body for a full night’s sleep. The goal is to deter students from turning to OTC medications such as Z-Quil or Tylenol PM in order to sleep and teach natural, healthful alternatives.

Before program:

* Tell RA to have students bring their tea cups for samples

Materials:

* Foods: dried cherries
* Tea to sample (i.e. Tazo Rest, Celestial Seasonings Sleepytime, Chamomile)
* Natural supplements to show (i.e. melatonin, valerian root)
* OTC sleep aids to show (i.e. Benadryl, NyQuil, Tylenol PM)
* Hot pot to boil water for tea
* Speakers playing relaxing meditation music

Introduction:

* “Hi everyone! Welcome to my program, “Sending zzzzz’s your way!”
* Start by introducing yourself with your name, major, and year of study. Explain that you are a Wellness Ambassador in the Simmons Health Education & Wellness Department, and explain what your role is. “The Health Education & Wellness Department here at Simmons is comprised of the Wellness Ambassadors, FIT at Simmons, and Betsy’s Friends. My goal as a Wellness Ambassador is to passionately promote personal health and wellness to the greater Simmons community. I am trained by healthcare professionals in a variety of topics such as fitness, nutrition, healthy body image, eating disorders, stress management, drugs and alcohol, and healthy relationships among others. (Also, the fields of nutrition and psychology that I am studying and the yoga practice that I maintain at a local Boston studio have provided me with invaluable knowledge on how to keep our bodies functioning well physically and emotionally.)”

Program Outline:

* Introduce what you will be discussing in the program that evening.
  + “So, tonight, as the title entails, we will be talking about not only the importance of sleep, but how to *get* that sleep that is so important. We constantly hear that as college students, getting 7-8 hours of sleep a night is ideal just to maintain emotional health and physical health… in other words, prevent us from coming down with a range of illnesses that keep us from being productive and having fun.”
  + High risk behaviors to avoid to prompt sleep: Utilization of OTC medications and other substances
  + Natural remedies through food, beverages, supplements, and routines
  + Take-aways
* Be sure to emphasize that you will give some relevant information but that questions or personal advice/tips are welcomed and readily encouraged. Also, be sure to emphasize that what is said in this room regarding personal stories, etc. will stay in this room. (This will create a feeling of trust and foster open conversations.)

(*Choose one of the following two activities – ice breaker and myth/fact exercise – to begin.)*

Ice Breaker:

* Explain that we are going to start with an ice breaker
* Have each person choose a colored stone out of the bowl. Each of these corresponds with a question below. Explain that we will go around the room and each person will say their name, grade and major, and answer the corresponding question.
* Indigo = How much coffee do you drink per day? Could you go without?
* White = What is your best tip to ensure a good night’s sleep that YOU actually use?
* Blue = What is the most interesting, weirdest, or most vivid dream you’ve ever had?
* Lavender = Do you think naps are beneficial?
* Peach = What is your weekend sleep routine like?

“Would you doze off if you were...

...sitting and reading?

...watching television?

...sitting in a meeting?

...a passenger in a car for an hour?

...lying down to rest in the afternoon?

...sitting quietly after lunch?”

… If you answered yes to any of these questions, then you may be sleep deprived!

Myth/Fact Exercise: (*provided by the National Sleep Foundation*)

* I can have alcohol or wine with my sleep aid – it will help me get to sleep faster
* Insomnia is not a serious medical condition and has no consequences
* Men and women are affected the same way by insomnia
* Exercising before bed will make me tired, and help me sleep
* Watching TV in my bedroom and working on my laptop in bed helps me wind down and fall asleep
* Sleep is not important. I can just get by on a few hours
* I can make up for the lack of sleep during the week by sleeping in on the weekends

Program:

* Utilization of OTC medications to sleep (*have containers/packages of some of these medications or “sleep aids” to show*)
* First, ask the group if anyone is willing to share if they use particular OTC medications or other substances to sleep. Then, go into the following facts about particular substances:
* Facts about Benadryl
  + Contains antihistamines which provide a sedative-like effect, though are not recommended for more than 2-3 days because your body will become tolerant (no longer sedating)
  + Frequently cause daytime drowsiness the next morning
  + Side effects include
* Facts about Xanax
  + Intended use for anxiety and depression; provides a sedative-like effect; can be habit-forming/addictive
  + Side effects include
* Facts about Nyquil
  + Intended to act as an antihistamine to provide a sedative-like effect to those suffering from an autoimmune infection; not recommended for more than 2-3 days because your body will become tolerant
  + Side effects include

(ZzzQuil is apparently less effective at promoting sleep, though less habit-forming than Nyquil)

* Facts about Tylenol PM
  + It is a combination of acetaminophen and antihistamine used to reduce fever and mild to moderate pain, may be used as a nighttime sleep-aid, non-habit forming
  + Taking excess acetaminophen can cause serious liver disease, especially when combined with alcohol
  + Frequently causes daytime drowsiness
  + Should only be taken on an as-needed basis
* Facts about alcohol to sleep
  + While alcohol might calm you at first, it actually increases the number of times you will awaken during the night, giving you a very interrupted sleep
* Takeaway 🡪 These are unnatural chemicals you are placing in your body to suppress natural functioning and may have unwanted side effects from persistent use
* Importance of true sleep
  + Short sleep duration is correlated with low leptin (appetite-suppressing hormone) levels and high ghrelin (appetite-stimulating) levels, leading to increased feelings of hunger and subsequent increased food intake. This has been correlated with obesity in some individuals.

(*Leptin, Ghrelin, and Sleep; 2004*)

* Sleep recharges the body
  + After 18 hours of sleep deprivation, brain functions plummet – similar to the brain when intoxicated
  + After 24 hours of sleep deprivation, the brain can shut down completely
* Sleeping in on the weekend will not make up for lost sleep during the week (sleep debt!)
* How to manage sleep naturally (*see \* below*)
  + Explain that many natural teas, supplements, and foods contain sleep/calm-inducing elements such as the following:
    - Supplements and Teas: melatonin (regulates circadian rhythm sleep-wake cycle), valerian root (no morning grogginess), chamomile, lavender
    - Foods: oats (carbohydrates boost serotonin in the brain to calm you), dried cherries, turkey (tryptophan), warm milk (tryptophan)
  + Explain that, beyond particular natural substances, one’s behaviors play a major role in inducing sleep
    - Wind down an hour before you go to bed (ie. shut down laptop, tv, cell phone on silent)
    - Meditative music
    - Keeping a notebook next to your bed to get out all nuisance thoughts
    - Easy reading
    - Yoga or gentle stretching, deep breathing
    - Using an eye mask and ear plugs, or lavender pouches you’re making!
    - Regular daily exercise in the morning or afternoon… NOT right before bed
    - No naps after 4pm! (10-30 minutes around 2-3pm… the time of day when you experience post-lunch sleepiness and lower alertness)
    - Going to bed/waking at a similar time daily to create a rhythm
* Take-aways
  + Tell students where these natural sleep items can be found locally (i.e Trader Joes, CVS, Walgreens, Whole Foods, Shaws)
  + Encourage taking the time to utilize these ideas, and patience because they might not be fully effective right away
  + Remember the particular side effects from alternative sleep aids…
* Question time! (*If there are questions asked that you do not know, tell the student you will find out and e-mail them within a few days*)

*\* When discussing natural ways to manage sleep, have sample foods and brewed teas available to try. Also, go through a basic stretching or yoga routine to teach the process of “winding down” if you are well-versed in a particular routine. Playing meditative music quietly in the background during the program is a good way to generate a particular mood.*

References

Taheri S, Lin L, Austin D, Young T, Mignot E (2004) Short sleep duration is associated with

reduced leptin, elevated ghrelin, and increased body mass index. PLoS Med 1(3): e62.

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/sleep-aids>

<http://www.sleepfoundation.org/sleep-facts-information/myths-and-facts>

<http://women.webmd.com/pharmacist-11/natural-sleep-remedies>