**Sleep – Why is it Important?**

U.S. workers get about 1.5 hours less sleep than they did a couple of decades ago. The average person gets less than 7 hours of sleep each night.

Why does this matter? Who cares?

Did you know that getting enough sleep can help you at work and improve your health?

* **It will limit procrastination.** Lack of sleep influences your ability to focus and make good decisions. This can lead to procrastination. Staff who are well rested are able to make sound decisions and stay focused.
* **It will help improve creativity and problem solving.** Research shows that lack of sleep can impair cognitive skills, creativity and problem solving.
* **It will enhance work performance.** Quality sleep has been linked to improvements from discernment to impulse control, focus, problem solving, working memory and the ability to learn and retain information.
* **It will increase workplace safety.** Sleep deprived employees have the most workplace accidents.
* **It will reduce absenteeism.** Chronic sleep deprivation can cause a variety of health issues ranging from chronic fatigue to diabetes, cardiovascular disease, stroke and even dementia. People who get enough sleep are healthier and take less sick days.
* **It will boost morale.** Lack of sleep makes us grumpy and irritable and puts you at risk for depression. Well rested employees have better emotional and mental health, thus leading to better working relationships.
* **It will help you maintain or even lose weight.** When you are sleepy you eat more especially caffeine, fatty and junk foods and carbohydrates. Then you are so full you cannot fall asleep and the cycle continues. Your body craves junk food but you brain loses the impulse control to say “no”. Hormones ghrelin and leptin control your hunger. Ghrelin makes you hungry and leptin tells you to put your fork down. When you are sleep deprived your body makes more ghrelin making you hungrier and you have less leptin to stop you from over eating.

Now what? I am going to challenge each and every one of you to get at least 7 hours each night. If you do not, here are some tips:

* Turn off your computer, cell phone and TV at least one hour before you go to bed
* Create a bedtime ritual. Take a warm bath, meditate or read. No problem solving at bedtime!
* Stick to a schedule even on weekends. Wake up and retire at the same time every day.
* Watch what you eat and when. Avoid heavy meals and alcohol close to bedtime. Stay away from caffeine – it can stay in your system for 5 or 6 hours.
* Turn off the lights. Darkness tell your body to release melatonin which is a natural sleep hormone.