BOOK REVIEWS

The Sleep Revolution: Transforming Your Life, One Night at a Time

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The past three decades have seen an explosion of interest in sleep and sleep health. However, in spite of a boom in the fields of sleep research and clinical sleep medicine, the prevailing culture of sleeplessness persists. Further, although the health, economic, and quality-of-life consequences of insufficient and disturbed sleep are well known within the sleep medicine community, we possess limited ability to drive broad cultural change. A revolution of sleep health will require the sustained collaboration of multiple stakeholders as well as endorsement of highly visible exemplars and champions of sleep. Following a multiyear stretch of 18-hour workdays that resulted in a bona fide collapse from exhaustion, Arianna Huffington became just such an ally in the mission to improve sleep health. Indeed, she has launched sleep health initiatives on multiple college campuses, spoken at national sleep events, and written a best-selling book.

The Sleep Revolution: Transforming Your Life, One Night at a Time seeks to build upon the commercial success of her previous number one New York Times bestseller, Thrive. The Sleep Revolution is composed of two parts. In Part One, “Wake Up Call,” Huffington considers sleep within a broad cultural context and makes the case that we are in a sleep crisis. Specific chapters discuss modern, historical, and scientific perspectives on sleep, as well as sleep disorders and dreaming. Experienced sleep specialists will recognize many of the anecdotes and sources, such as Roger Ekirch’s At Day’s Close. Huffington clearly did her homework for this book and includes multiple expert interviews and current references. These chapters thus are a handy compendium for sleep medicine professionals to familiarize (or reacquaint) themselves with important sleep-related stories that are too often lost in the practice of clinical sleep medicine or sleep medicine research. Part One concludes with one of the strongest chapters in the book, a discussion of normal dreams and dreaming. Sleep medicine has largely marginalized the importance of dreaming, while focusing largely on rapid eye movement sleep pathologies. Huffington takes a much more nuanced approach, guiding the reader from the earliest psychoanalytic approaches to dreaming through modern understanding of dream physiology, as well as addressing nightmares and lucid dreaming. The chapter includes both personal anecdote as well as historical case studies to demonstrate that certain dreams can provide psychological guidance or spiritual direction. Indeed, for the open-minded sleep medicine specialist, perhaps the book’s most important suggestion is simply to record one’s dreams in a bedside dream journal.

Part Two, “The Way Forward,” presents Huffington’s recommendations for how to improve our individual and collective sleep states. A broad range of topics are addressed, including sleep duration, bed partners, sleep hygiene, napping, time zone travel, sleep in the workplace, celebrity sleep, sleep and athletic performance, and sleep and technology. As in Part One, individual chapters are well researched and reference both historical and current events. Even experienced sleep medicine specialists will gain a new statistic, anecdote, or insight to share with patients or trainees, or to insert into casual conversation. Of particular note, Huffington asserts that she wants to “romance” sleep. In this vein, her attention to bedroom detail is not only laudable from a sleep health perspective, but also conveys the kind of deep reverence for sleep that sleep medicine clinicians strive to instill in their patients. Multiple appendices include a sleep quality questionnaire, recommendations for sleep meditations and apps, a review of hotel sleeping quarters, and a mattress buying guide.

In spite of these many strengths, the book is very text heavy and at nearly 400 pages, would benefit from figures and summary tables, which could serve to engage lay readers. Similarly, the book would be strengthened by discussion of the tension between Huffington’s own drive and professional success on the one hand, and her commitment to sleep on the other hand. After all, most readers would likely trade several years of overwork and sleep loss in exchange for the many millions of dollars she received when the Huffington Post was sold to AOL in 2011. Yet sleep medicine specialists wrestle with this same tension everyday, instructing our patients to schedule 7 to 8 hours for sleep or avoid alcohol before bed, for example, but not following our own advice in these and other aspects of sleep health. Thus, far from indicting Huffington as hypocritical, this tension makes her human.

The Sleep Revolution is not intended to change clinical practice. However, this book provides the broadest and most
engaging overview of sleep since Dr. Dement’s seminal *The Promise of Sleep*. It thus has great potential to increase cultural awareness and affect cultural attitudes. Sleep medicine specialists should support this laudable goal, read the book, and gain insight into the cultural discourse regarding sleep.

**CITATION**


**DISCLOSURE STATEMENT**

Dr. Wickwire has received research support and moderated noncommercial scientific discussion for Merck and is an equity shareholder in WellTap.