Hyun Ji Jeung

Professor Ashline

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The Decline of a Necessity in Life

In "Our Sleep Problem and What to Do About It," Betsy Isaacson asserts that people today sleep significantly less than in the past because of modern technology and lifestyle and states that sleep deprivation can be detrimental to people's mental and physical health, emphasizing the fundamental importance of sleeping sufficiently. To begin with, Isaacson introduces a theory that people's sleeping patterns have changed ever since electricity was distributed, explaining that the traditional way of "segmented sleep" was abandoned and people began to sleep later and less. Isaacson then continues by examining more detailed reasons for the loss of sleep. First, she points out that the arrival of current technology largely contributed to sleep disturbance. She demonstrates that the blue lights given off by electronic devices interrupt the internal body cycle by decreasing melatonin formation. Isaacson also argues that the abundance of stimuli in modern cultures is another trigger for sleep deprivation. She mentions that according to some research, people are pleasantly stimulated by dopamine when they receive new messages and pop-ups from social networking systems. On the other hand, a sufficient amount of sleep is required to have the will to oppress dopamine ejection. Therefore, she explains that the social networking systems and the lack of sleep form a vicious cycle in which people feel even more difficult to sleep. Moving on, Isaacson further illustrates some consequences generated by the shorter sleeping hours. First of all, she observes that caffeine is ubiquitous these days and is found not only in drinks but also in diverse groceries. She discusses that the increasing popularity of stimulants led to further development and commercialization of once neglected chemicals. Secondly,

according to Isaacson, the army uses transacranial direct current stimulation (tDCS) to keep soldiers awake, by directly stimulating their brain with electric shock. She points out that the machines for this procedure are stealthly traded among ordinary people, and some strong chemicals are also repurposed and consumed by the public. Thirdly, Isaacson addresses the "Uberman" sleep schedule, through which people can stay up with no external stimuli. She explains that this method of getting a twenty-minute short sleep every four hours allows a person to sleep for the minimum amount of time needed for REM sleep, which is necessary for survival. However, she also notes that this method might even lead one to faint after some physical exertion. In addition, Isaacson claims that current atmosphere of our society demands people to sleep less and work more. She borrows a line written by Douglas Haddow in *Adbusters,* which says, "sleep is the enemy of capital," and explains that many capitalists today want their employees to be more efficient by staying awake longer, believing that sleeping is unproductive and uneconomical. The writer also notes the millennials' negative potential to become the most sleep-deprived because of such social pressure. As a consequence, she mentions that young people have become the main target for the energy drink market, and their health problems, as well, are coming to the surface. She warns that long-term sleep deprivation can even harm cognitive functions, which can possibly lead to Alzheimer's. Finally, she suggests some solutions that could ameliorate sleep deprivation. One option is to use smart drugs to promote brain activities rather than directly manipulating sleeping hours. However, since smart drugs are not fully studied and possess potential hazards, Isaacson concludes that the best solution is to change the existing working habits so that people can work more efficiently by having sufficient rest. To sum up, by analyzing the seriousness and intensity of the causes and the consequences of sleep deprivation, Isaacson urges society to realize the importance of sleep and pursue a healthy life with an adequate amount of sleep.