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Sleep More, Do More

In “Our Sleep Problem and What to Do About it,” Betsy Isaacson uses numerous quotes and research studies by experts in various fields, to emphasize the importance of sufficient sleep in the long term over the short term efficacy of reducing sleep. To support the claim, she criticizes the current American preference for less sleeping by accentuating a number of related health problems, points out the limitation of the existing methods for shortening sleep, and suggests one genuine solution of her own that contradicts the conventional remedy. Isaacson begins her article by blaming the creation of the light bulb for disturbing human’s biological clock and presents a recent study on sleep patterns showing that the average sleeping time of the American people is plunging as time goes by. According to Isaacson, two major causes for the sleepless night are the blue lights of modern gadgets, which disrupt melatonin’s controlling the biological cycle, and people’s addiction to the electronic devices during night time. Isaacson argues that a certain amount of dopamine created through the use of electronic gadgets could be ignored by willpower, but people who lack sleep are less willing to suppress the lure of getting this instant pleasure and thus stay up late to play with their tablets. Meanwhile, people have tried all sorts of methods to deal with such a sleeping trend. First, Isaacson mentions the shockingly various ways of including caffeine in everyday items and food products in today’s markets. She says the public’s obsession with caffeine led to the idea of adding pharmaceutical ingredients into people’s drinks, too. Moreover, according to Isaacson’s reference, tDCS, the brain-zapping current simulation that is highly efficient compared to conventional caffeine, as well as

Modafinil, a strong excitant that was originally used as sleep disorder remedy, have been used in the military to improve soldiers' vigilance. She notes that these two technologies have currently found their ways onto private sectors. Besides the aforementioned pharmaceutical and military mechanics, she introduces a sleep timetable named Uberman that is basically taking short naps every few hours, so that the total sleeping time in a day is much less than the normal eight-hours. Supporters of Uberman argue that despite its possible danger of sudden fainting, Uberman saves large amount of time because Uberman reorients the brain's sleep pattern to solely focus on REM sleep that is essential to survival while getting rid of non-REM sleep. Isaacson then moves on to discuss why society struggles so hard for not shutting eyes. Isaacson refers to a cogent remark by Douglas Haddow who says, "Sleep is the enemy of capital." (qtd. in Isaacson) The remark means that for a capital society, sleep is a waste of time as it does not produce or consume any goods. She adds that such a notion was why factory workers during the Industrial Revolution frequently drank cups of coffee and tea to stay awake and enhance their concentration on operating machines. Isaacson reports that another socioeconomic reason for the recent sleeping deprivation problem in America is that Americans work too much. She suggests numerous statistics proving that the average American nowadays works longer than any time, than people in any other countries. Inconstant and uncomfortable work time due to part time jobs or night-time work is also the cause of sleep deprivation, says Isaacson. She stresses that millennials are the main victim of such irregular work schedules as they suffer the highest stress level and concentration problems. She points out that energy drink companies perceive these sleep deficient youths as the most lucrative target consumers because millennials are becoming the top sleepless group in the current society. Finally, Isaacson indicates a few severe long-term health problems of youths and cognitive disorders caused by sleep deprivation. By emphasizing that chronic sleep deficiency not only causes changes in gene expressions but also leads to other serious

diseases, ranging from deterioration of memory to inability of brain cell's flushing away of harmful toxins, Isaacson criticizes the earlier mentioned efforts to cut sleep duration and highlights the importance of sufficient sleep. Therefore, she suggests two possible solutions to solve the urge for less sleep without actually depriving people of their sleep. One existing solution is the use of smart drugs, which enhance effectiveness but do not interfere with sleep. Isaacson, however, impugns the abuse of smart drugs as their use for a long period of time may hinder young adults' brain elasticity and is involved with some ethical problems. Due to these limitations of the existing solution, Isaacson eventually suggests one genuine solution of her own: transforming the fundamental working circumstances. She strongly argues that related successful measures already being taken in other countries and some revolutionary American companies include regulating after-hours work, constructing nap rooms inside the work place, or reducing the total working weeks. By presenting much convincing scientific evidence proving that a proper amount of work time and brief naps are essential for higher work efficiency, Isaacson urges that making changes in the basic working environment is the only treatment. To conclude, throughout her article, Isaacson chastises the recent trend of sleep deprivation in America, clarifies the causes and reasons for this phenomenon, reminds people of a number of related health problems, and finally disputes the conventional efforts and the old solution to underline her own solution. In the end, she counters the pervasive notion that sleeping is a waste of time but rather appeals to the long-term significance of getting plenty of sleep.