

I have always felt lucky to be a good sleeper. Lights out, head on the pillow and I quickly sail into this dreamy stream of unconsciousness. I wake up and feel refreshed. I used to think that sleeping long hours was good for me. It gave my body time to rest. But it was becoming excessive. When living abroad and having relapsed, I used sleep as a get out of jail card. When low mood and anxiety hit me like a slap in the face, which was most days, I would send myself off to sleep. I would finish work in Germany at 2pm and, struggling to know how to get through the afternoon and evening, I would hit the hay. My body became so used to sleeping on demand that I would nap in the afternoon, and then sleep through until the next morning. I was averaging 11 hours a night and it was very unhealthy.

Then there is the other extreme. When I don't get enough sleep my mood plummets. It's as if with each hour of sleep I miss out on, a chunk of healthy perspective is taken from my mentality. I'm irritable, intolerable, quiet and overwhelmed with a dread for the future then when I'm energised and motivated seem to dissipate. Sleep is vital for managing our emotions but I personally think that it is our perspective that suffers most when we are tired.

The Dartboard

Imagine our mind is a dart board and the dread of depression is the bullseye. When we are well rested we can see the bullseye, but we also have a wide and beautiful perspective of all the other areas on the dartboard. When we are in need of rest, the mind closes in. Sometimes our perspective closes in so much that all we can see is that bullseye of depression. A lot of people lack a wider, positive perspective and just carry on because they are not yet at rock bottom. But imagine zooming right out from the bullseye of depression that, when you're tired, is all that you can see. Zoom out to the rest of the scene and then the dot in the middle of the dartboard will seem tiny in comparison to the positivity around it.

If we get too much sleep then this perspective isn't a reality. The zoomed out view of a good night's rest is so usual to the mind that when depression comes and the perspective is tiny and focused on the bullseye, a good night's sleep no longer has the same effect. It is as if our mind and body becomes immune to the power of sleep.

Use sleep to your advantage. 7-9 hours per night should see you healthily perceiving the world around you. If there is something on the horizon that is concerning you and feels heavy, sleep on it and it will weigh less by the morning.