

The impact of sleep on Total Force Fitness - A self-reflection tool

Sleep is a foundational block of health and military performance. If you compare your performance on the days you sleep well vs. those you don't, you can probably list at least one difference. Most people notice changes in their level of alertness and their ability to focus. But the impact of sleep on performance goes beyond that. Sleep deprivation can affect your health and performance in negative ways you don't see or might take a long time to notice. And when you get enough sleep, it supports your performance across all areas of Total Force Fitness (TFF).

Poor sleep traps: Surprising ways a lack of sleep can hurt your performance

Use this sleep traps self-reflection tool to learn how sleep impacts your health and performance. Read the sentences below describing the impact of sleep deprivation on each TFF domain. Think about how you usually feel when you don't get enough sleep. Then, review the list of poor sleep traps to identify how a lack of sleep might have negatively impacted you. Check each poor sleep trap you fell into. Write any specific ways you remember experiencing that trap so you're more mindful in the future about getting more sleep.

Physical Fitness

- A lack of sleep accelerates my fatigue and decreases my stamina.
- A lack of sleep impacts my ability to learn new motor skills.
- A lack of sleep might have contributed to my past and current injuries.
- A lack of sleep decreases my coordination, speed, reaction time, or endurance.
- A lack of sleep is impacting my physical fitness goals (e.g., muscle gains).

Mental Fitness

- A lack of sleep makes it harder for me to regulate my mood.
- A lack of sleep reduces my ability to control my impulsive behaviors.
- A lack of sleep increases my stress levels.
- A lack of sleep makes it harder for me to focus, think critically, and make decisions.
- A lack of sleep makes it easier for me to make mistakes.
- A lack of sleep impairs my attention and alertness.
- A lack of sleep reduces my ability to learn and remember things.

Social Fitness

- A lack of sleep increases my aggressive behavior.
- A lack of sleep increases my tendency to blame others for problems.
- A lack of sleep increases my feelings of loneliness.
- A lack of sleep reduces my ability to accurately read others' emotions.
- A lack of sleep decreases my willingness to solve conflicts.

Nutritional Fitness

- A lack of sleep increases my hunger and cravings.
- A lack of sleep increases my desire for fatty foods and carbs.
- A lack of sleep makes me eat fewer fruits and vegetables.
- A lack of sleep makes me want to eat close to bedtime.

Spiritual Fitness

- A lack of sleep reduces my self-control.
- A lack of sleep increases my impulsive behavior.
- A lack of sleep makes it harder for me to live out my values.

Medical Fitness

- A lack of sleep makes me get sick more often.
- A lack of sleep makes me feel “off.”
- A lack of sleep increases my sensitivity to pain.
- A lack of sleep might have contributed to my unwanted weight gain.
- A lack of sleep might have contributed to my health problems such as diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular disease.

Financial Fitness

- A lack of sleep increases my tendency to buy things I want now, instead of saving for a bigger goal.
- A lack of sleep affects my ability to make wise financial decisions.

Reflection, Part 1:

Now, take a moment to reflect and identify any core values or meaningful goals you have and might be negatively impacted by poor sleep.

Examples: *When I'm sleep deprived, I don't have energy for relationships and often ignore my child.*

Sleep deprivation is making me drift away from my spouse.

When I don't sleep well, my bench press and other exercises one-rep maximums decrease.

Sleep as a TFF tool: Performance-enhancing benefits of sleep

Reflect on a time when you got amazing sleep and felt fully rested and energized for the day. Then, evaluate your readiness on those days for each area of TFF. This activity will help you to be mindful of how sleep can be a performance- and well-being enhancer.

			Social Fitness	Physical Fitness	Financial Fitness	Spiritual Fitness	Medical Fitness	Nutritional Fitness	Mental Fitness
1	Recovery	Debilitated, depleted, ill, injured, broken, or disconnected							
2	Restoration	In the process of addressing injury, illness, or difficulty							
3	Maintenance	Sustaining baseline health and performance							
4	Enhancement	Proactively preventing injury and difficulties or actively growing							
5	Optimization	Thriving, energized, connected, and approaching peak performance							

Reflection, Part 2:

List 1–3 insights about the importance of sleep that will increase your motivation to prioritize sleep in the future.



20 Holistic Sleep-Optimization Tips for Better Performance, Mental Health, and Resilience



10-Day Sleep Diary



Sleep vacation: One way to transform your sleep for military wellness and performance optimization

Prioritizing sleep can be a game-changer for each area of TFF, but it's not the only way to enhance your performance.

For any TFF domains you're still rating yourself lower than you'd like, visit www.hprc-online.org for military-specific, research-based resources to optimize your performance.