

Study: Sleep Could Help Teens Cope With Discrimination

Young people handle negative social situations better when they've gotten enough quality shuteye.

March 12, 2020 By [Alicia Green](#)

For teenagers, a good night's sleep could do more than help them stay awake at school. Restful slumber may also improve young people's ability to deal with social stress, such as discrimination and challenges associated with ethnic or racial bias, according to new [findings](#) published in the journal *Child Development*, reports Michigan State University's [MSU Today](#).

The study tracked the physical activities of 256 ninth graders and determined their sleep-wake state every day for two weeks using an actigraphy watch, a medical device that continually measures activity and movement. Before bed every night, students completed a survey that required them to report their daytime experiences with ethnic or racial discrimination, how they responded to stress and their psychological well-being.

Researchers found that when teens slept longer and better the night before, they coped better with discrimination and other harsh experiences. In response to difficulties, these youngsters were more apt to resolve problems and seek support from those in their age group.

"Compared to parents, peers are likely to be witnessing and involved in adolescents' experiences of ethnic or racial discrimination on a daily basis," said Yijie Wang, PhD, assistant professor of human development and family studies at MSU. "As such, they're more of an immediate support that backs up adolescents and comforts them when discrimination occurs."

Nevertheless, parents play a key role in assisting kids establish good sleep habits by setting regular hours for bedtime, limiting social media use and making sure their sleeping environment is peaceful.

Wang stressed that the findings are key to understanding how sleep helps youngsters handle social challenges. Subsequently, this might show how promoting sleep can improve youngsters' ability to adjust during high school as well as later in their lives.

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