

# Questions for Essentialism

## Chapter 8

This is a list of discussion questions to help work through the content of the book

“Essentialism” By Greg McKeown.

Major principles:

Protect the asset. You need to care for your mind and body through rest and sleep so that you can understand what is important and be effective over the long haul

Key examples/illustrations

- Entrepreneur Geoff and burnout, panic attacks. Highly successful yet believing he had no limits. His overwork required a 2 year sabbatical for healing.
- The study quoted by Malcom Gladwell in his “10,000 hour rule” for excellence also requires adequate sleep.
- Harvard Medicine Sleep School and the article “Sleep Deficit: The Performance Killer.” Sleep deprivation leads to impairment similar to a blood alcohol level of .1%.
- Journal of nature study about puzzle solving abilities and the beneficial effects of sleep.
- Google sleep pods.

1. Getting enough rest may involve scaling back on work and other activities. Why is scaling back so hard for you?
2. The belief that we can “do it all” can reveal a dangerous pride. We think the limits do not apply to us. Do you feel that needing rest is a sign of weakness?
3. When so many others are burned out and exhausted, we may be reluctant to take time off because it will look like weakness or a lack of commitment. Are you afraid of looking uncommitted or weak? Who are you worried about disappointing? Why?

4. Without rest, we might be able to do some amazing things in the short run. But we may also have problems in the long run. Think of your important relationships and work. What would happen to those relationships and projects if you suffered a 2 year health crisis due to burnout?
5. McKeown writes (p.94) “By the time I was twenty-one I too thought of sleep as something to be avoided. To me, it was a necessary evil.” Do you have a philosophy of sleep?
6. How do you feel about sleeping in on a day off? Do you feel guilty? Do you struggle feeling like you have to justify this to yourself or others? Why?
7. McKeown quotes Bill Clinton when he said that every major mistake he had made in his life happened as a result of sleep deprivation. Has anything like this (major or minor) happened in your life? Reflect on this.
8. Why might sleep deprivation lead to poor decision making? What does this reveal about your mind and emotional needs for making decisions?
9. What is the difference between operating at a high level of contribution and just being busy? How does sleep influence this?
10. One reason that we struggle with getting sleep is the myth that if we sleep less we will accomplish more. Why is this idea wrong headed? What is the truth that we need to shatter this lie?

11. We readily reject the idea that people can perform well at work while drunk, yet we don't think much about people that come to work sleep deprived. Why is this inconsistent? What can we do about it?
12. Pulling an "all-nighter" and working through exhaustion can give the appearance of productivity and commitment. How is this different than real effectiveness in the long run?
13. The author quotes the Journal of Nature Study on the improved puzzle-solving abilities of people with more sleep. This suggests something about how our brain works to solve problems. Re-read pages 99-100 and put into your own words the benefits of sleep for solving difficult problems and creativity.
14. Being sleep deprived affects our ability to distinguish between the vital few and the trivial many. Apply this: What does it suggest about your sleep patterns? How can you use this to make better decisions?
15. In the high success world some top leaders and creative people are talking more about the importance and value of sleep. Think of a person that you respect who is both highly productive person and also makes sleep a priority? Read the WSJ article "Sleep Is the New Status Symbol For Successful Entrepreneurs" quoted in the book to delve deeper on this subject.