

Perspectives



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Rhythms

James Gaffey

So I am late to school yet again.

I am a 17-year-old adolescent boy and I crave and love sleep.

But I get scolded for this passion every time I arrive a few minutes after the bell.

How can I help it? It's only natural.

It is only completely natural.

We, as humans, the omnipotent controllers of this dying planet, state quite comfortably, and live by, the assumed fact that there are 24 hours in a day. So we can work and play when it's light, and sleep or play when it's dark.

But new research into the human being's circadian rhythm has been recently undertaken, to discover shocking results. This research incorporated scientists keeping a willing human one kilometre beneath the Earth's surface, with no exposure to natural light whatsoever. The subject slept when he was tired, and rose when he was no longer. He repeated this pattern for six months, just listening to his body.

And compared to our self-created circadian rhythms up here, he wasn't far off. His body let him know that a full day was not 24 hours, but in fact, 26.5.

No wonder all I want to do in the morning is sleep.

And in case you have doubts, they repeated that experiment with other humans, below and above the ground.

You can't argue with nature.

JAMES GAFFEY

And why am I so alert at night? Why am I so energetic after the sun goes down? Why am I suddenly infused with the urge to go for a run?

Because it is natural.

Let's go back a few millennia.

It is the caveman era.

The adolescent men make their way through the forest, run across the plains, climb the rock faces and clamber up trees all around the world.

Why?

Because the sun is setting.

Once they assume their vantage positions they stay as alert as I am at night, scanning the horizon for threats to their people, who are peacefully sleeping.

They do not tire. Their bodies won't let them. However, when the sun rises, the village comes to life, and the night watchmen are rewarded with slumber.

Now I am not sure about others, but there has never been a time when the night air hasn't invigorated me. It really is a whole new world, where different animals come out and your surroundings are bathed in the eerie silver of the moon. It is a time when you can go for a run without overheating.

But most of all, it is a natural time for reflection, another world from the hustle and bustle of daily life.

It is an environment where it is just you, God and Mother Nature. Because God is always listening, and Mother Nature never sleeps.

In our ever-busy and all-important human lives, it is easy to forget about reflection and meditation, and unfortunately the power of it is coming to be disregarded. We need to pay more attention to our souls, because it is from within our souls that we find deeper meaning to our lives.



Some schools in America have heeded the cries of the adolescent body and shifted the beginning of school to a later time of the morning. They have accommodated the adolescent body's natural tendency to stay up late, and have been reaping the

benefits of a significantly higher production rate from their students.

Now it's only recently that we, the human population as a whole, have started listening to our planet.

We have been driving our cars wherever we go, creating landfill, burning fossil fuels, coughing pollutants from our power plants into the sky, and leaving our office lights blaring on for years, with blatant disregard for our planet, our home. We have declared this planet ours, when we are actually of the planet, and taken matters into our own hands.

We continue to slaughter animal species to extinction, passively and actively. We continue to chop down our rainforests, the lungs of this earth. We continue to condemn innocent plants as prohibited 'substances', forgetting, among all the commotion, that they are plants of this Earth as we are, and that God himself put them there as part of an ecosystem, an ecosystem we clearly don't appreciate.

Now we have turned our world into an imbalanced urbanisation; and we are paying the price for our ignorance with global warming.

Only now we choose to listen to our Earth.

But now it is so late that the notion of reversing this problem is in severe doubt.

We have been ignorant towards our Earth.

We cannot do the same thing to our bodies.

We, as an Australian society, need to change.

We can start by moving the first bell of high school a couple of hours into the day.

We can start by setting aside some time in our lives for reflection on them.

But most of all, we can start by listening to nature.



James Gaffey wrote this in 2008 when he was in Year 11 at Xavier College in Victoria.