

**Client:** University of Warwick  
**Source:** The Daily Telegraph (Main)  
**Date:** 06 May 2010  
**Page:** 24  
**Reach:** 685177  
**Size:** 840cm2  
**Value:** 21042



# Get by without sleep? Dream on, Dave

*As the Tory leader works through the night in a final campaign push, Judith Woods wonders whether he should be tucked up instead*

It's hard not to feel grudgingly impressed at how David Cameron has taken political campaigning to a new level with his breakneck, 36-hour Final Push. The Tory leader has upped the ante with his Obama-style 24/7 electioneering in a bid to win the hearts and minds of fishermen, firemen and delivery drivers the length of the nation.

Reaching out to a traditionally neglected constituency of night workers was a shrewd move on the part of dynamic Dave, but perhaps not such good news for the rest of us. For although his "Nessun Dorma" routine clearly went down well in the chippies of Cumbria, it sets an uncomfortable precedent that sleep is something that can be dispensed with if there's hard graft to be done – when in fact, the absolute opposite is true.

Sleep is a necessity, not a luxury, as it allows the brain and body to recover and repair themselves. So while there's nothing wrong with the occasional all-nighter spent glad-handing insomniacs and kissing babies (many of whom are conveniently nocturnal), he really shouldn't make a habit of it, most especially if he ends up running the country.

"If a candidate is simply pressing the flesh and trotting out platitudes, then staying up all night isn't a problem," is the verdict from Prof Jim Home, of the Sleep Research Centre at Loughborough University. "But if someone is in high office and they react to a crisis by not sleeping, that will impact on their decision-making and mood, and that doesn't bode well."

"A lack of sleep affects areas of the brain that respond to novelty, so a person is unable to take on new information, think innovatively or respond intelligently to changing circumstances. Instead, they become irritable and fixated on trivia to the point of obduracy, regardless of the advice they are getting."

Recent history is littered with

catastrophes caused wholly or partially by sleep deprivation on the part of key personnel – Bhopal, the nuclear meltdowns at Chernobyl and Three Mile Island, the Space Shuttle Challenger disaster and the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

Moreover, drinking endless cups of coffee might keep you awake, but it won't bestow a clear head, as the crucial cognitive areas of the brain you're trying to perk up are unaffected by caffeine. Indeed, far from restoring your perspective, a double espresso is more likely to tip you into megalomaniac euphoria.

The famously irascible Gordon Brown, a tea-drinker, was notorious for burning the midnight oil and firing off emails in the small hours, unable to switch off. And while his aides deny suggestions that he sometimes goes to bed at 3am and rises two hours later, a former Downing Street aide claimed last year that Brown would be a better premier if he had a decent night's sleep.

Jonathan Powell, who was Tony Blair's chief of staff, said: "I would always rather work and vote for a leader who sleeps well than one who wants to be woken up all the time... politicians get too little sleep. They need more time to rest and think."

Powell's observation chimes with a study in 2005 by the Sleep Council, which discovered that politicians were among the most sleep-deprived of all professionals, managing an average of 5.2 hours a night. This was far less than solicitors (7.8), mothers of young children (7.1) and teachers (6.0). Only hospital doctors managed less shut-eye, with 4.5 hours.

It's hard to escape a certain machismo that surrounds the sleeping habits of the powerful. At one extreme, George W Bush was derided as childish for his 9pm bedtime. At the other, Margaret Thatcher boasted she needed just four hours' sleep. Churchill also got by on

four – but with a crucial two-hour top-up.

"You must sleep some time between lunch and dinner, and no halfway measures," he opined on the virtues of taking 40 winks. "Take off your clothes and get into bed. That's what I always do. Don't think you will be doing less work because you sleep during the day. That's a foolish notion held by people of no imagination. You will be able to accomplish more."

It's impossible to imagine any modern politician standing on the threshold of Number 10 and setting out his napping agenda for the next parliamentary term. Nonetheless the jury is out on exactly how much sleep we need to remain healthy.

After analysing 16 sleep studies involving a total of 1.3 million people, a team from the University of Warwick and the Federico II University Medical School in Naples concluded this week that sleeping too little – or too much – could be deadly.

People who regularly sleep for fewer than six hours a night were 12 per cent more likely to die before the age of 65 than those who slept six to eight hours. However, sleeping more than nine hours led to a 30 per cent greater likelihood of an early death.

"Modern society has seen a gradual reduction in the average amount of sleep people take," says Prof Francesco Cappuccio, of the Sleep, Health and Society Programme at Warwick University and a consultant physician at the University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust.

"What we are trying to say is that sleep is an environmental factor that is important to our health and it is being overlooked as a potentially important public health factor."

Our sleep needs alter over a lifetime; newborns sleep for up to 18 hours, children up to 11 hours, teenagers about nine hours, adults and the elderly between six and eight hours. Whatever your age, however, an



**Client:** University of Warwick  
**Source:** The Daily Telegraph (Main)  
**Date:** 06 May 2010  
**Page:** 24  
**Reach:** 685177  
**Size:** 840cm2  
**Value:** 21042



inability to sleep can be distressing.

The actress Drew Barrymore and rapper Eminem have both spoken publicly about their struggles with insomnia. In 2008, the actor Heath Ledger officially died of an overdose, but the drugs found in his body were all medications used to aid sleep. Significantly, a month before his death, he admitted to the *New York Times* that he felt so agitated he was barely getting more than two hours' sleep a night.

"It's been proven that a lack of sleep causes stress; psychologically and physiologically," says Prof Cary Cooper, professor of organisational psychology and health at Lancaster University's Management School. "We need sleep because it gives us an opportunity to process information and also because we are biological machines with a lot of moving parts that need to be renewed and repaired during sleep.

"If you work beyond the capacity of your body to repair itself you will get ill; your immune system and your cardiovascular system will be compromised. Workaholics also suffer because their unsociable hours mean their family life withers and they lose their support system so when things get tough there's no one there to help them because they didn't invest enough time or emotion in the people around them."

Just as most of us instinctively know how much sleep is ideal, so too are we driven by an impulse to stay up late or rise early. Research by the University of Surrey in 2007 identified the gene that dictates whether an individual is an "owl" or a "lark".

The clock gene comes in a long and a short variant; those with the longer version are larks, who find it hard to stay awake and perform tasks at night. People with the shorter version – owls – have higher attention levels and a better working memory between 4am and 8am, when shift-workers typically have most difficulty staying awake – until a bright-eyed, bushy-tailed Tory leader pops up to chat about corporate tax reform.

Cameron may have a head's start, but a potent brew of excitement, adrenalin, trepidation and naked fear will keep every politico in the land

wide awake tonight as the polling results begin trickling in and the nation's fate is decided.

Interestingly, "Nessun Dorma" from Puccini's *Turandot*, opens with the line "None shall sleep!" And ends with "Vanish, O night! Set, stars! At dawn, I win, I win! I win!"

Perhaps Cameron's valiant Final Push will prove to be the clincher; only dawn tomorrow will tell. But even if he doesn't become Prime Minister, at least Sam will be pleased that her husband's all-nighters have given him a bit of practice before the new baby arrives.



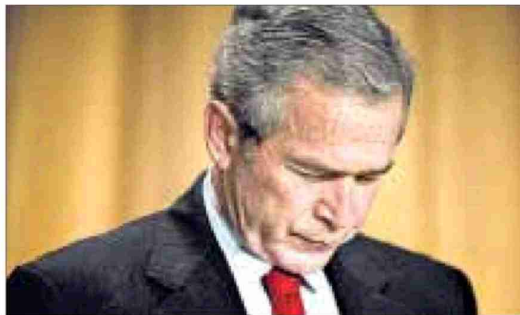
*Politicians get too little sleep... they need more time to rest and think*



**Client:** University of Warwick  
**Source:** The Daily Telegraph (Main)  
**Date:** 06 May 2010  
**Page:** 24  
**Reach:** 685177  
**Size:** 840cm2  
**Value:** 21042



**Bug-eyed or boggle-eyed? Churchill, above, survived on four hours; insomnia sufferer Drew Barrymore, right; When president, George Bush, below, liked to be in his pyjamas by 9pm; left, night bird Cameron**



DAN CHARITY; PERSONALITIES; MICHAEL LOCCISANO; BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI



**Client:** University of Warwick  
**Source:** The Daily Telegraph (Main)  
**Date:** 06 May 2010  
**Page:** 24  
**Reach:** 685177  
**Size:** 840cm2  
**Value:** 21042

---



DAN CHARITY

