

Are you becoming a MONSTER?

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We all heard it during command indoctrination, "On this ship, the sailors live on Monsters." Monsters being the energy drink that is stocked and strategically placed in areas around the mess decks. It took a few weeks of walking around and noticing the lines in front of the machines, to determine the statement was true.

In fact, since the warship Nimitz has left Bremerton, there have been more than 47,095 energy drinks sold. It got me thinking, how much sleep are these sailors getting? According to the National Institute of Health, getting 7-9 hours of uninterrupted sleep a night improves performance, mental clarity, and your immune system.

Now all departments are different onboard and the amount of sleep a sailor tries to get can be impacted by numerous factors. For me, it's the noise. I am not sure who is right above my stateroom, but it sounds like there are tryouts for the next John Wick movie going on every night or maybe that is where they film the action scenes for Transformers that play on the ships movie channels.

Regardless of the cause, interrupted sleep definitely has a hand in making us feel more tired during the day and delays our ability to think quickly. But wait, there is an answer, right? I'll just drink a Monster, and I will feel right as rain. Though this may be partially true, the fact is that the energy that you feel from the Monster is not going to last that long and the effects of crashing are what's on your horizon. No problem, just drink



another one, right? Although this might have the desired effect, you have now tampered with something that is as dangerous as the Demogorgon from Stranger Things. Your body is going to rely on this stimulant to keep you focused, and without it, you are making a lot of trips to the Upside Down.

What is in this magic potion that helps keep you running like a well-oiled machine? As I am sure they would like it to be a trade secret, the main ingredients are caffeine, sugar, taurine, vitamin B, and numerous other ingredients that I could write about for hours.

Now let's look at that first ingredient, caffeine. Think of the old salt, the chief and their coffee cup. Coffee has caffeine, right?

Sure it does, however the dosage in a cup of coffee is significantly smaller than in an energy drink. For instance, an 8oz cup of coffee has 80mg of caffeine in it. Whereas, that Monster can have 160-200mg of caffeine per can. How many Monsters have you had today? How about in an average day? Just to give you an understanding of levels of caffeine and what it can do to your body, I am going to reference the Federal Drug Administration (FDA). The FDA states that the maximum amount of caffeine for an adult is 400mg a day. The benefit from 400mgs shows improvements in alertness, but does not match the alertness level of someone who receives a solid night's sleep.

Also the FDA estimates that toxic effects, like seizures, can be observed with the consumption of 1,200mg of caffeine. However, this would be if you drank 1,200 mg all at once of course. Show of hands... who "chain drinks" your Monsters throughout the

day? I would consider that to be rapid consumption. Besides seizures though, some of the signs and symptoms that you can experience from over-consumption of caffeine are: sleep disruption, jitters, anxiousness, fast heart rate, upset stomach, headache, and a feeling of unhappiness (dysphoria). That first one really clicks home in reference to this article, doesn't it? Sleep disruption, or the inability to be able to fall asleep. I know what you are thinking, "Sandman, isn't that why I drink my Monster?" My answer is no, you are drinking your monster to try to be alert at times that you need to be awake.

Sleep is required when you are done for the day. Picture it, you just finished off a tall boy Monster during your last hour of shift, and made it. You get back to your berthing, hit the shower (hopefully), and then head to your rack for a blissful night of great dreams and rolling seas. Instead, you lay there staring at the rack above you. You hear all the noises around, you toss and turn until finally you pull out your phone or tablet and start watching a movie. Three hours later, you are still there until sleep finally hits you. Then, as you enter your first Rapid Eye Movement (REM) cycle of sleep where you start to repair, the sound of reveille sounds off and it's time to get out of your rack. You're not sure of where or who you are, you go through the motions of getting your uniform on and cracking your first, of many, Monsters of the day. This cycle repeats itself day in and day out until you hit that point. The point where the Monsters are not even working anymore. You can't focus, you start forgetting things, and your heart is always running a little faster than normal. You perspire, even though you are not doing anything involving labor. You get to the point where you finally decide to come to medical and your pulse is 130 beats per minute and your blood pressure is really high. We obtain an electrocardiogram (ECG) on you and even though you are in your early 20's, it shows signs of some kind of damage to your heart.

I know what you're thinking, "Hey sandman, you're just trying to scare us." Maybe, maybe not. The fact of the matter is there is data out there that suggests the overconsumption of energy drinks can increase the risk of cardiovascular disease. Current literature from the National Library of Medicine shows that there is a direct correlation between the overconsumption of energy drinks and cardiovascular changes.

Now, I am not saying that you have to throw away your energy drinks, or never drink them again. What I am saying is that everything should be done in moderation. Nothing makes you feel more awake than a good night's sleep. If you are having trouble falling asleep because of noise, use some ear plugs. If you find your mind racing, try to focus on self-centering yourself with breathing exercises or the old classic of counting

sheep. Try getting out and getting some gym time without the pre-work out mix. What I am saying and what I want you to understand is to plan a good time for your caffeine. Whenever your morning is, you can drink it up to half of the day, after that focus on water and nutritional snacks. Quality foods, with regular exercise will do a world of wonders for your sleep hygiene and help you perform better than any Monster ever could. So please don't become a Monster and to paraphrase the Big XO, "it's your body Nimitz, own it and make it better!" Sandman out!

