

## **RESTFUL SLEEP WORKSHOP**

A healthy adult on average needs 7-9 hours a night – by working out what you need, you can set up your sleep schedule. Good quality sleep means you typically fall asleep within 30 minutes or less, sleep soundly through the night with no more than one awakening, and drift back to sleep within 20 minutes if you do wake up

### **MAKING YOUR SLEEP ENVIRONMENT THE BEST IT CAN BE**

#### **Bed is for sleep and sex**

Bedroom is not a café, a reading room, a cinema, an office, where you make your shopping list or do your online shopping, or play video games

#### **Make the bedroom a ‘sanctuary place’ – a recovery room**

Ensure the space is clean, tidy and peaceful – de-clutter. Get rid of things not needed or liked. Make sure colours are calming and relaxing. If you use room fragrances, choose calming ones. You want the room to be a sleep friendly place

#### **Gadget free bedroom**

Get rid of distractions such as TV, CD player, computer. Leave the mobile phone downstairs. The backlit ‘blue light’ displays suppress melatonin production – the hormone that helps you sleep – stop using these devices around 2 hours before you go to sleep to reduce their impact on it

If necessary, buy yourself an alarm clock – but individuals who have insomnia often watch the clock so turn the clock’s face out of view so you don’t worry about the time while trying to fall asleep. Consider black out curtains.

#### **Make sure bed is comfortable**

Get bedding right – not too heavy or too light – be at a comfortable temperature. Having a comfortable mattress and pillow can help promote a good night’s sleep.

#### **Comfortable room temperature**

Generally around 16-20 degrees

#### **Minimise noise**

If there is traffic noise or you can hear neighbours, consider using earplugs

#### **Minimise light**

If there’s street lamp outside, or a light is left on for children, consider using an eye mask. Blackout curtains?

#### **Pets on/in the bed**

Do they disturb you?

## **SLEEP DIARY**

The discipline of a diary can really help you identify patterns as you look back to see what has and what hasn't worked for you. Make copies of the form attached and try completing it every day in the week ahead so see what you notice.

## **LIFESTYLE FACTORS**

How you live your life as a whole will impact on your sleep.

### **Stick to a Sleep Schedule**

Some of us will need more than 8 hours, others less. Some of us will be early to bed and early to rise, others more night owls. ... that doesn't really matter.

Go to bed at the same time each day, set alarm to wake at same time each day - as creatures of habit, people have a hard time adjusting to changes in sleep patterns. This programmes the brain and internal body clock to get used to a set routine.

Sleeping-in at the weekend won't fully make up for a lack of sleep during the week and will make it harder to wake up early on Monday morning – as it upsets your routine

### **Winddown Routine**

Make time to prepare your mind and body for winding down before sleep. Consider a technology shut down – phone, email, TV, - i.e.. stimulants that keep you alert.

Set aside around 20 mins for doing something relaxing, calming and enjoyable – read a book, listen to calming music, do some gentle yoga stretches, listen to a relaxation track, meditate.

### **Exercise – not too close to bedtime**

Try to exercise at least thirty minutes on most days but not later than two to three hours before your bedtime. Exercising on a regular basis can help reduce anxiety and relieve stress. But do it earlier in the day.

### **Avoid caffeine after lunch**

Coffee, colas, certain teas, and chocolate contain the stimulant caffeine, and its effects can take as long as eight hours to wear off fully. Caffeine affects ability to fall asleep and also prevents deep sleep. Therefore, a cup of coffee in the late afternoon can make it hard for you to fall asleep at night.

### **Avoid Nicotine**

Nicotine is also a stimulant, which can make it more difficult for smokers/vapers to get to sleep, many smokers sleep only very lightly. In addition, smokers often wake up too early in the morning because of nicotine withdrawal.

**Avoid alcoholic drinks before bed**

Having a nightcap or alcoholic beverage before sleep may help you relax, but heavy use robs you of REM sleep, keeping you in the lighter stages of sleep. Heavy alcohol ingestion also may contribute to impairment in breathing at night. You also tend to wake up in the middle of the night when the effects of the alcohol have worn off.

**Avoid large meals and drinks close to bedtime**

A light snack is okay, but a large meal can cause indigestion, which interferes with sleep. We eat to provide energy. Drinking too many fluids at late in the evening can cause frequent awakenings to pee. Food and drinks containing lots of caffeine or sugar can keep you awake – avoid them later in the day

**Food to aid sleep**

Best foods include milk, cherries, oats, chicken, rice, pumpkin seeds sunflower seeds, peanuts as they can produce chemicals that increase our desire to sleep. (Tryptophan that converts to serotonin in the brain). Worst ones are fatty meat and curry

**Don't take naps after 3pm**

Naps can help make up for lost sleep, but late afternoon naps can make it harder to fall asleep at night. Limit to an early in the day nap and for 15 mins. Falling asleep depends partly on 'sleep drive' – the longer you are awake, the greater the need or drive for sleep. So need to be awake for around 16 hours to create enough drive. It's easy to mess up your sleep pattern – e.g. falling asleep in front of TV, trying to catch up on sleep by staying in bed later in the morning or taking long naps.

**Have some sunlight exposure during the day**

Daylight is key to regulating daily sleep patterns. Try to get outside in natural sunlight for at least thirty minutes each day. Sleep experts recommend that, if you have problems falling asleep, you should get an hour of exposure to morning sunlight and turn down the lights before bedtime.

**Warm Shower/Bath**

Not too hot! Helps your body reach a temperature that's ideal for rest.

**Melatonin**

Naturally produced by pineal gland - tells body to get ready to sleep. Bright light – especially blue suppresses production. Prescription from GP may help some – but not all.

All of these are suggestions for you to explore – aim not to be dogmatic – you're not trying to set up rules just get away from a vicious circle.

## **SLEEP WORRIES QUESTIONNAIRE**

How you feel about sleep. Explores your thoughts and emotions about sleep – use the form attached a few times to identify your experiences.

One of the largest obstacles between you and sleeping well is how you view your insomnia – which of course determines how you feel and react when you experience it. If you can stop fighting your sleeplessness, you can direct that energy into allowing natural sleep to emerge and get back to your life.

## **MORE PRACTICAL TIPS**

### **Have medication review**

Check with your pharmacist or GP that none of your medications are impeding your sleep - some commonly prescribed heart, blood pressure, or asthma medications, as well as some over-the-counter and herbal remedies for coughs, colds, or allergies, can disrupt sleep patterns

### **Write ‘to do’ list**

Writing down a ‘to do’ list for the next day before going to bed can help organise your thoughts, clear your mind of distractions and stop you worrying about next day in bed

**Occasionally**, if you have a really bad night and find yourself lying awake for more than about 20 minutes, or if you are starting to feel anxious or worried, get up, go to another room and do something relaxing until you feel sleepy. This is so that bed does not get connected with being awake, frustrated, anxious about sleep. There’s no need to clock watch, just estimate the 20 minutes.

**Alternatively** get up, go to another room. Write down the worries you think may be keeping you awake – then write down an appointment time to deal with them – e.g. have interview on Thursday need to prepare – book an appointment on Monday at 7pm for 30 mins. i.e give yourself a time to sort things out – so that now, at night, there’s nothing on your worry schedule. Helps break the cycle of tossing and turning But remember .. it’s occasional, don’t make a habit of getting up during night.

### **Daily technology exposure**

21<sup>st</sup> Century lifestyle is typically fast paced, chaotic and jam packed with technology. Try to reduce your exposure – less email/social media checking etc. Watch something on TV you’d like to, but don’t have it on just as a distraction.

### **Avoid worrying about not sleeping**

Thinking about sleep too much or trying to force yourself to sleep will only keep you awake. Learning how to relax both your body and your mind instead will help you get to sleep more easily.

Hopefully you've started to realise that our struggle to sleep or our reaction about not sleeping actually makes it worse – drives anxiety. Our sleeplessness is often about not being able to switch off the thoughts in our head – hence the integration of calming techniques right from the start. When we get anxious or 'pumped up' we're not going to sleep!

Research suggests that good sleepers do nothing but sleep well. Insomniacs spend lots of time worrying about sleep – the lack of it – anticipation – worrying about the past or the future.

### **Mindfulness**

Many find regular meditation practice helpful. Perhaps you could bring a few simple mindfulness practices into your day to help keep you more grounded.... in effect scheduling pauses, oases of calm during your day

- Brushing your teeth
- Noticing a flower
- Making/drinking tea/coffee
- Listening to a piece of music
- Stroking pet
- Eating piece chocolate

Practicing mindfulness during the day – away from the pressure of lying awake in bed – simply observing thoughts in a detached way can be really beneficial

### **RELAXATION TIPS**

**Tuning in to breath:** try when thoughts are racing and you feel yourself getting agitated. First check, am I really too hot/cold, need a wee? Then one hand on belly IN 4 OUT 6 – at least 6 breaths.

You're not consciously trying to stop the thoughts – fighting them – you are choosing to think about something else - the breath ..... which with practice will ease the thoughts too. It becomes not about trying to get to sleep, but creating a different mental state – one where sleep becomes much more likely. Inevitably, from time to time thoughts will intrude – but then you have a choice as to whether to engage with them, or simply gently bring your mind back to your breath.

The harder you chase sleep, the faster it runs. If you fight it, it fights back.

**Safe Place Relaxation:** try this download to calm anxious thoughts

**Leaves in a Stream** - Another technique you can use is the practice of letting go of worry thoughts – which are generally about things that have already happened – you can't change them, or about the future – which hasn't happened yet. A technique from mindfulness is the process of letting things go (or be). Download available on website

**In conclusion...**

Don't expect things to magically resolve in a few days. You need to work consistently at creating new habits. Try not to get disheartened when you feel you are not making progress. Go back to the sleep questionnaire and review all the tips in this document. Be really honest with yourself and make the changes you need to – it will pay dividends. Make a calmer approach to life a key goal and build in the changes in lifestyle that you need.

Good luck ... you're worth it.

**SOURCES**

Online:

Mental Health Foundation

National Sleep Foundation

NHS Live Well

Clinical Sleep Research Unit Loughborough University

Nuffield Department of Clinical Neurosciences

Psychology Today

The Sleep Council

Books:

CBT : Elaine Iljon Forman & Clair Pollard

Sleep : Nick Littlehales

The Sleep Book : Dr Guy Meadows