

UWE Wellbeing Service

Sleep

Are you having trouble sleeping? Do you toss and turn trying to fall to sleep? Do you wake up frequently? Do you wake up early in the morning and cannot get back to sleep? Do you lie awake thinking worrying thoughts?

There are many reasons why your sleep pattern might change from time to time. Life events and experiences affect each one of us differently; how we interpret and manage them can impact on our ability to settle to sleep. When we identify what is troubling us, and explore ways to resolve those difficulties, we are less likely to spend time worrying rather than sleeping. Rather than focusing your attention on the worrying thoughts, notice without judgement that they are just thoughts and gently bring your attention somewhere restful and comforting – using imagery, mindful breathing and relaxation. Sleeping well is a habit that you can learn! Small changes can have big effects.

Take care of your body and your mind:

- Cut down on caffeine (tea, coffee, some soft drinks) after 4pm. Try a soothing drink like camomile tea or a milky drink
- Avoid eating a big or spicy meal late in the evening
- Don't go to bed hungry
- Avoid alcohol as it interferes with sleep

Physical Exercise - Try some regular exercise during the day - swimming or walking, or whatever choice of activity that you enjoy. Avoid exercise late in the evening.

Having a regular bedtime routine teaches your body when it's time to go to sleep.

Relaxation - Use your choice of **Relaxation Technique** before going to bed - whatever works for you.

Thoughts - If something is troubling you and there is nothing you can do about it right away, try writing it down before going to bed and then reassure yourself you can deal with it tomorrow.

Avoid clock watching when in bed – it can lead to worrying thoughts about not sleeping. Put your attention somewhere restful, use imagery, mindful breathing or your relaxation technique.

If you cannot sleep, don't lie there worrying about it. Get up and do something you find relaxing like reading or listening to quiet music. After a while you should feel tired enough to go to bed again.

Make your bedroom a pleasant place to be – are there any changes you can make? Is your bedroom too light/too dark? Too hot / too cold? Too noisy? Is your bed comfortable?

When in bed think of nice things – e.g. 5 nice things that happened today – they might be big or small, such as a conversation, seeing the sunshine or gratitude for something or someone.

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Websites

- **Get Self-help** – information / tools on mindfulness, relaxation, music and imagery
<http://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/>
- **Mental Health Foundation** – National charity for mental health awareness see publications and 'Sleep Podcast' podcast by Dr David Peters
<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/how-sleep-better>
- **Mind** have also produced very useful and readable/straight forward information/ideas on how to improve your sleep
<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/sleep-problems/#.WZ2PFf6Wzcs>
- **MoodJuice** - help you think about emotional problems and work towards solving them. Emotional problems are often the mind and body's way of saying that something needs to be changed <http://tinyurl.com/goehfmv>
- **NHS Self-help guide** – detailed information from the NHS about sleep, sleep problems and how people can improve their own sleeping habits
<http://www.nhs.uk/pic/selfhelp/>

Apps

- **Sleep Easily Meditation** - Guided meditation which combines soothing music with talking you through the relaxation process. <http://tinyurl.com/jrekpoa>
- **Calm - Meditation and Relaxation** - Guided sessions running from 2-20 minutes with a range of background scenes and sounds to choose from (think beaches, meadows and rain). <http://tinyurl.com/zw6mwhc>

Books

- Meadows, G. (2014). **The Sleep Book**: How to Sleep Well Every Night. This book written by physiologist Dr Guy Meadows uses a blend of Mindfulness and Behavioural Therapy techniques to create a 5-week plan to cure insomnia.
- McKenna, P. (2009) **I Can Make You Sleep**. Exercises and simple changes in your thinking and behaviour can have a significant impact on your sleep. Comes with a hypnosis CD

