

Guide to Better Sleep

Getting a good night's sleep isn't just about feeling rested—it's crucial for your brain's health and your emotional balance. Quality sleep helps regulate emotions, enhances cognitive function, and calms the brain's stress response. This guide shares practical tips for better sleep hygiene and psychological strategies to help you unwind and improve your sleep quality.

Sleep Hygiene Tips

- Stick to a regular bedtime and wake-up time, even on weekends.
- Keep your bedroom cool, dark, and quiet with comfy bedding.
- Dim the lights before bed and get plenty of natural light during the day.
- Wind down before bed with activities like reading a calming book, taking a warm bath, or practicing soothing rhythm breathing. Avoid working, watching stimulating shows, or reading intense materials in the hour or two before bed.
- Cut back on caffeine and nicotine, especially close to bedtime.
- Stay active during the day, but avoid intense workouts close to bedtime.
- Keep daytime naps short (20-30 minutes) and early in the afternoon to avoid interfering with nighttime sleep.
- Limit alcohol intake and avoid nightcaps as this disrupts sleep.
- If you can't sleep, get up and do something relaxing until you feel sleepy.

Psychological Tips for Better Sleep

1. Stress management:

Use relaxation techniques like soothing rhythm breathing or mindfulness meditation to manage stress before bed. Writing down worries or upcoming tasks can also clear your mind before bedtime.

2. Acceptance:

Acknowledge that occasional periods of wakefulness during the night or before falling asleep are natural; see if you can allow the wakefulness to be. Don't try to control it or fight it as this activates our threat response - which keeps us awake.

3. Positive sleep thoughts:

Swap negative thoughts about sleep with positive thoughts. For example, a negative thought might be: "I'm going to be exhausted tomorrow.", while a positive thought could be: "Even if I don't get as much sleep as I'd like, I'll still function well enough tomorrow - I've coped with less sleep before."

4. Do not check the time:

It can increase anxiety about falling asleep.

5. Mindful bedtime routine:

Establish a consistent bedtime routine that signals to your body that it's time to wind down. Stay present and mindful: focus on sensations like the warmth of a bath or the comfort of your bedding.

6. Self-Compassion:

Be kind to yourself if you have difficulty sleeping. Everyone experiences sleepless nights now and then; it's okay to feel frustrated.

7. Use apps:

There are lots of apps offering audios and exercises designed to aid sleep.

8. Values-based action:

Align your sleep habits with your values - prioritise sleep as part of your self-care routine, for example.



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