

A GUIDE TO BETTER

SLEEP



A guide for young people looking to improve their sleep

Young people commonly experience difficulties with sleep due to physical, mental, and social changes going on in their lives. For example, the pressures of homework, exams, relationships with friends, social activities, part-time jobs, and a host of fluctuating emotions can make it difficult for you to relax at night.

If you are reading this guide, you are likely struggling to get enough sleep each night. Our team of Children and Young People's Wellbeing Practitioners (CWP) work with lots of young people who experience sleep difficulties. We have created this guide to share tips on how to get good quality, restorative sleep. Importantly, we will explain the benefits of these strategies, including the science behind them the science behind them, and how sleep can impact our well-being. We aim to make you feel more confident making the right changes to your sleep.

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WHY IS SLEEP IMPORTANT?

SLEEP MATTERS

Sleep is super important, we need good quality sleep to be able to perform our best. While we sleep our body is working hard releasing growth hormones, repairing itself and restoring our energy levels. Sleep helps our body stay fit and healthy. Getting the right amount of sleeps makes it easier to maintain a healthy weight as it helps to control appetite and reduces cravings for sugary junk food.

While we sleep hormones are released supporting different functions including growth and strength as well as booting our immune system.



THE SCIENCE BEHIND SLEEP

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE SLEEP?

Our body rests during sleep but our brain is still active, we are still aware of our surroundings and can be woken up. There are four stages of sleep that everyone cycles through each night. These stages consist of two types of sleep, known as REM and Non-REM.

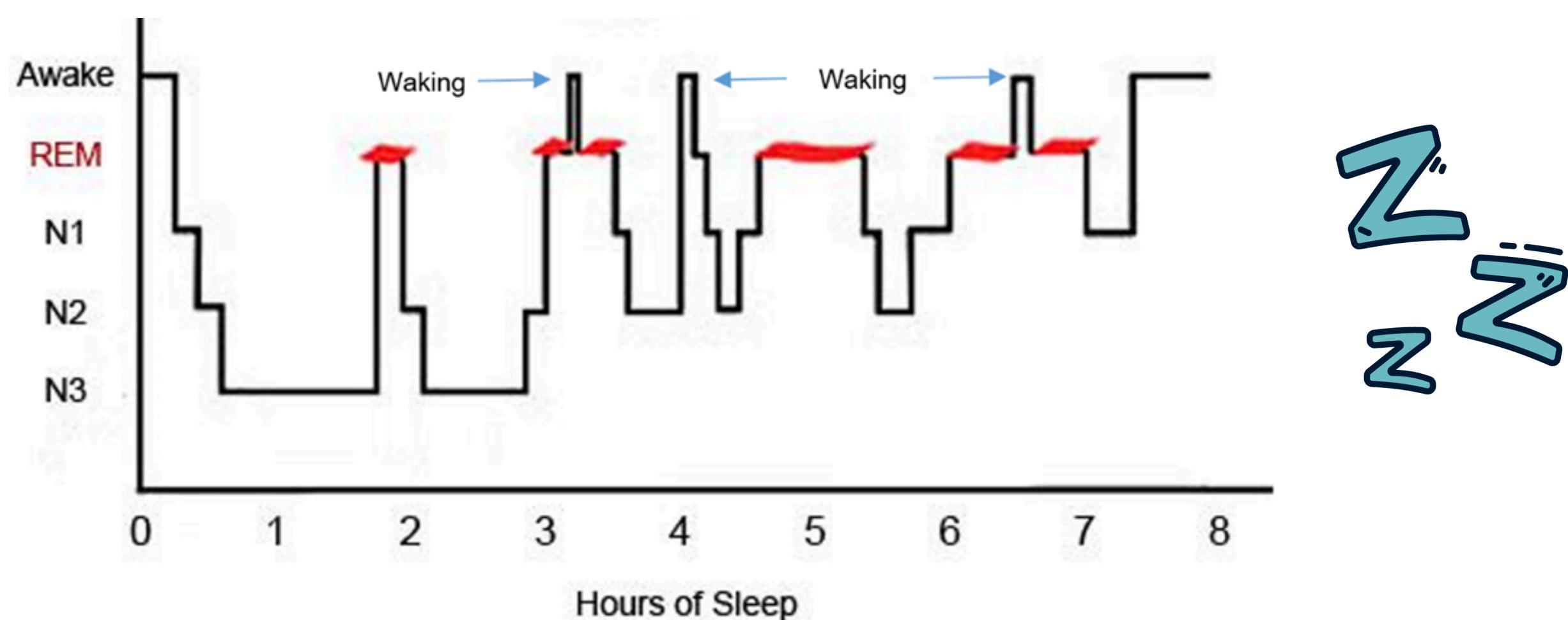
Non-REM sleep is your restful and restorative sleep that repairs your body. There are three stages.

- Stage N1**
Dozing
Firstly you start dozing, your heart rate slows down and muscles are relaxed.
- Stage N2**
Light sleep
Next is a light sleep, where you are still a bit aware of your environment, but if left undisturbed you will continue to stage N3.
- Stage N3**
Deep sleep
Finally, stage N3 is where you are in a deep sleep and find it difficult to wake up.

REM: Rapid Eye Movement

REM is where the body completely rests, our eyes move from side to side under closed eyelids, and the brain begins to process information from the day, consolidating information and developing your emotional abilities. In REM sleep, you dream, your body is calm and doesn't move, meaning you don't act out your dreams.

This graph is called a hypnogram. It shows you what a typical night's sleep looks like to scientists:



Hypnogram Taken from Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust

KEEPING A SLEEP DIARY

HOW CAN KEEPING A SLEEP DIARY BE HELPFUL?

A sleep diary helps you track how well you're sleeping and notice things that affect your rest — like screen time, stress, or what you eat and drink.

By writing down when you go to bed, wake up, and how you feel each day, you can spot patterns and figure out what helps you get better sleep and feel more refreshed.

Have a look at the example below, on page 4 there is a blank sleep diary for you to fill out and explore your own sleep patterns.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
Mood before bed. circle the number. 0= bad. 5= great.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
What time did you go to bed?	12 am : pm	10 : pm	2 am : pm
Did you have trouble getting to sleep?	Y or N	Y or N	Y or N
What time did you fall asleep?	2am :pm	12 am : pm	4 am : pm
Did you wake up during the night? How often?	Y or N	Y or N	Y or N
Mood when you woke up? (circle the number) 0 = bad 5= great	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
What time did you wake up?	7am	8:30am	6:30am
Total hours you slept for?	5hrs	8.5hrs	2.5hrs
comments	Mum had to wake me up for school	I was late for school	I am so tired I feel sick and have a headache

SLEEP DIARY

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Mood before bed. Circle the number. 0=bad. 5=great.	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
What time did you go to bed?	: pm						
Did you have trouble getting to sleep?	Y or N						
What time did you fall asleep?	: pm						
Did you wake up during the night? How often?	Y or N						
Mood when you woke up? (Circle the number) 0 = bad 5= great	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5	0 1 2 3 4 5
What time did you wake up?							
Total hours you slept for?							
Comments							

SLEEP STRATEGIES

TIPS TO IMPROVE SLEEP

ROUTINE

Routines aren't just for children, everyone can benefit from a good bedtime routine. If you are having trouble sleeping one of the first things to look at is your bedtime routine- do you have one, or would you like to improve the one you have? If you don't have one, we will have a look at what you can do to create a helpful bedtime routine.



We suggest starting a routine an hour before getting into bed and spend this hour out of the bedroom.



Try to spend some quiet time focusing on an activity you find calming/relaxing, this can be meditation, yoga, mindfulness, breathing techniques, craft activities, drawing, reading or playing musical instruments.



It's best to begin by turning off all screens, and dim the lighting to reduce stimulation before sleep



You could use the checklist on page 7 as a visual reminder.

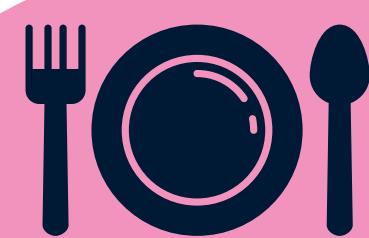
SLEEP TIPS - ROUTINE



Try to only use your bed for sleep, don't lie on it outside sleep times



Try to go to bed and get up at the same time everyday



Eat at least 2 hours before bed



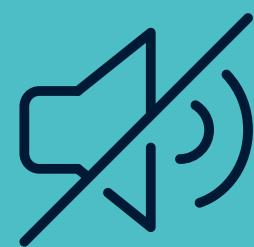
Have a relaxing pre bed routine



Have a hot bath or shower 20 minutes before bed



Make sure your bedroom is not too hot



Make sure your bedroom is a quiet place



Try drinking a milky drink or chamomile tea before bed



Avoid caffeinated drinks after 2pm



Turn off any screens, try leaving your phone out of your room



If you can't sleep after 20-30 minutes, it's ok to get up and do something calming



If you need help putting one of these tips in to practice, try asking someone to help you. It could be helpful to share these tips with parents/carers.

A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP CHECK LIST

Sleep tips:

Tick or cross

I go outside for at least four minutes every morning.

I stick to roughly the same bedtime and wake up time even on weekends.

I turn off technology one hour before bedtime.

I use a blue light filter after 7pm on my phone.

My bedroom is free of distractions and clutter.

I have a quiet and dark place to sleep.

I get 20-30 minutes physical activity each day.

I open my curtains or get light exposure as soon as I wake up.

I use relaxation and breathing techniques to help me relax when I am stressed.

I do not look at my phone if I am finding it hard to fall asleep.

I do not check my phone if I wake in the night.

I write my worries down on a notepad next to my bed/ write a to-do list.

I do not have caffeine after 2pm.

I drink a warm and milky drink before bed.

I do a relaxing activity in the hour before bed such as listening to music, a jigsaw, drawing or reading.

My room is a comfortable temperature.

MANAGING NIGHT-TIME THOUGHTS

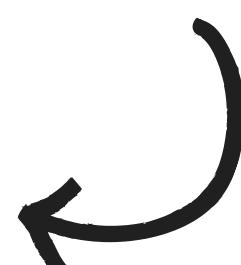
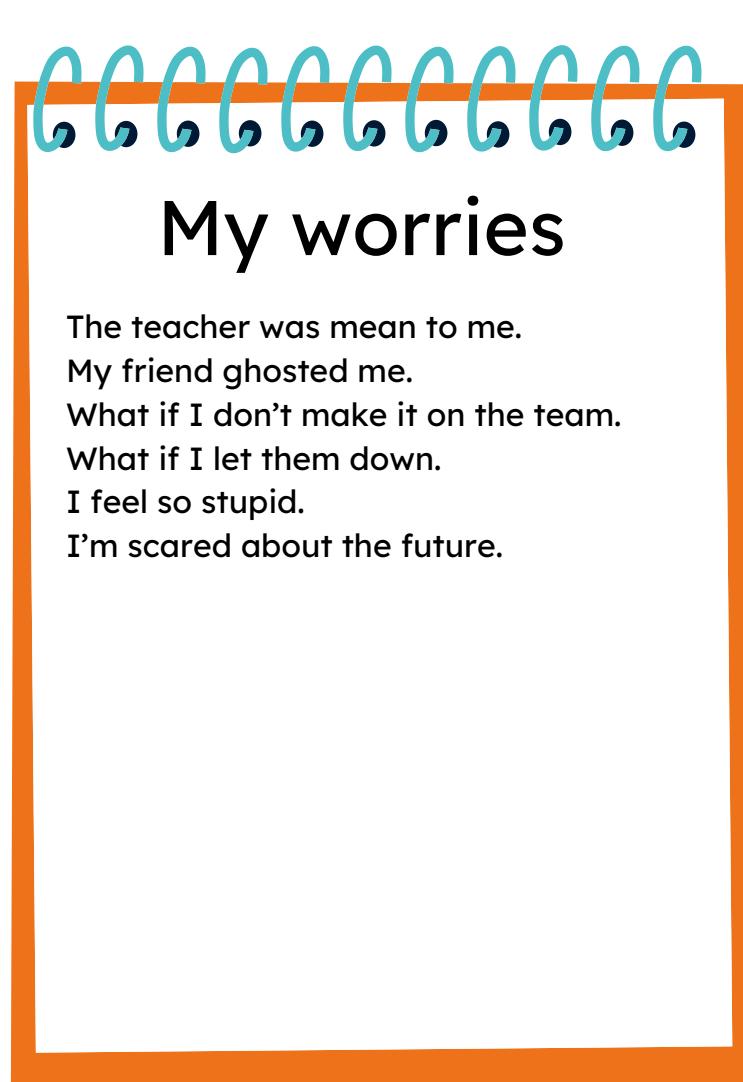
When your mind is racing with thoughts it can sometimes feel impossible to fall asleep. Lying awake thinking about them is unlikely to help and will possibly make things harder. There are a few strategies that could help.

WORRY TIME

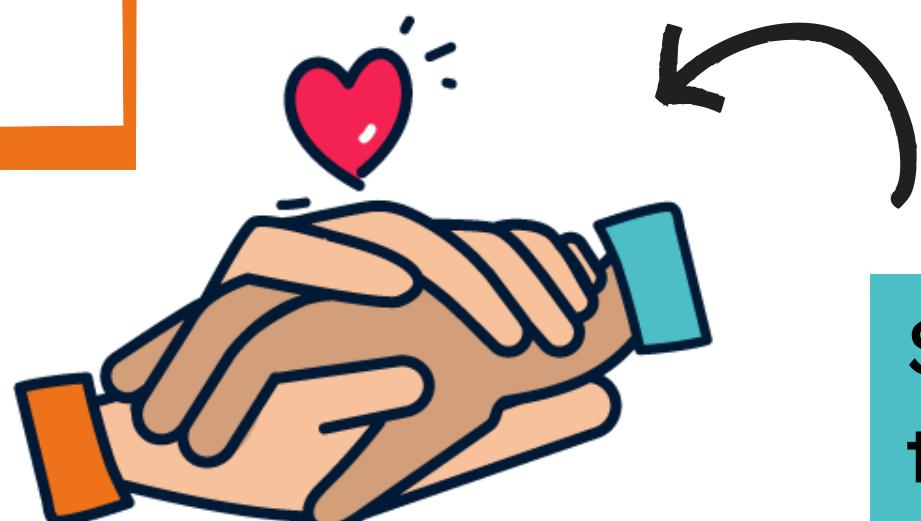
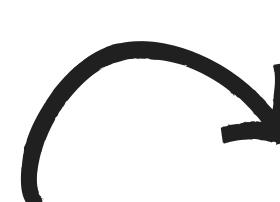


- You can try setting aside some 'worry time' each day (eg 10-15 mins). Write down your worries during the day and try not to think about them until this set time. You can then either get rid of the list, or have a think if there are any worries you can find solutions to for example; by speaking to someone about them.

Write your worries on a piece of paper



Write your worries on pieces of paper and put them in a "worry jar"



Speak to someone you trust about your worries

After completing worry time some of your worries may not need any more thought, and for some, you may be able to come up with solutions. If there is anything you are very worried about, that's causing you distress and you don't feel you can handle by yourself, please reach out and speak to someone you trust, perhaps an adult.

THOUGHT CHALLENGING

CHALLENGING UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS



You can try asking yourself some questions to replace unhelpful thoughts about sleep with thoughts that are more calming.

Next time you are awake and having unhelpful thoughts, try answering the thoughts with these questions:

- What is the situation? You could write who is there, what you're doing, and where its taking place. For example: "Lying in bed thinking about a conversation I had with someone at school"

- What are you feeling? You could write how you feel and rate how strong your feelings are from 1-10. For example "frustrated - 8"

- Unhelpful thought.
For example "I'm going to be so tired tomorrow I won't get anything done"

- Evidence for and against the unhelpful thought.
For example: "I'm probably going to be tired tomorrow. But I've gone to school without having had a full night's sleep before, and I've still gotten plenty of work done."

- Is there a different way of thinking about the situation?
For example: "I will get some sleep after a while, and maybe tomorrow will be a bit difficult, but I'll be okay at school".

- After you've written the alternative thought, rate how much you believe in the thought from 0% to 100%. For example: "I believe this thought 60%"

- Rate how strong your feelings are now, from 0% to 100%.
For example: "Frustrated - 50%"

SIGNPOSTING

MORE INFORMATION, ADVICE AND CONTACTS CAN BE FOUND AT THE FOLLOWING:

- Teen Sleep Hub: www.teensleephub.org.uk



- The Sleep Charity: www.thesleepcharity.org.uk

- National Sleep Helpline – 03303 530 541 between 9am and 11am on Mondays and Wednesdays and between 7pm and 9pm on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays.

- Young Minds: Website: www.youngminds.org.uk Sleep advice and information: www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/my-feelings/sleep-problems/



- Childline: Call - 0800 1111. Website - www.childline.org.uk
Sleep advice and information: www.childline.org.uk/infoadvice/your-feelings/feelings-emotions/problems-sleeping/

- Mind: www.mind.org.uk/for-young-people/feelings-and-experiences/sleep-and-mental-health/

