

A GENTLE PRACTICAL WORKBOOK

Sleep Starts When You Wake Up

A 7-day daytime reset for better nights



Seven small experiments. No perfect routine. No pressure to sleep.

Created by Louise Peers
Clinical Sleep Scientist · Ashby Sleep Solutions

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

A reset, not a set of rules

Sleep is shaped by much more than what happens at bedtime. Light, movement, daily rhythm, mental load and the way we respond to tiredness all influence how prepared the mind and body feel for sleep.

Over the next seven days, you will experiment with one small daytime change each day. This is not about forcing sleep or creating a perfect routine. It is about offering your body clearer, kinder signals and noticing what supports you.

Choose what feels manageable. Small and consistent is enough.

A quick check-in

Tick anything that feels familiar. There are no right or wrong answers.

- ☐ I see natural light reasonably soon after waking.
- ☐ My waking time varies considerably from day to day.
- ☐ I have some movement or activity during the day.
- ☐ I carry unfinished thoughts and tasks into the evening.
- ☐ I cancel plans after a poor night because I worry I will not cope.
- ☐ I spend a lot of the day monitoring how tired I feel.
- ☐ I speak critically to myself when I have not slept well.
- ☐ My day contains a clear difference between activity and rest.



Which part of your day currently feels least supportive of sleep?

DAY 1 / 07

Begin with light

Give your internal clock a clear morning signal.

Why it matters

Morning light tells your internal body clock that the day has begun. This helps organise alertness during the day and the timing of sleepiness later. Outdoor light is generally much brighter than indoor lighting, even on a cloudy British morning.

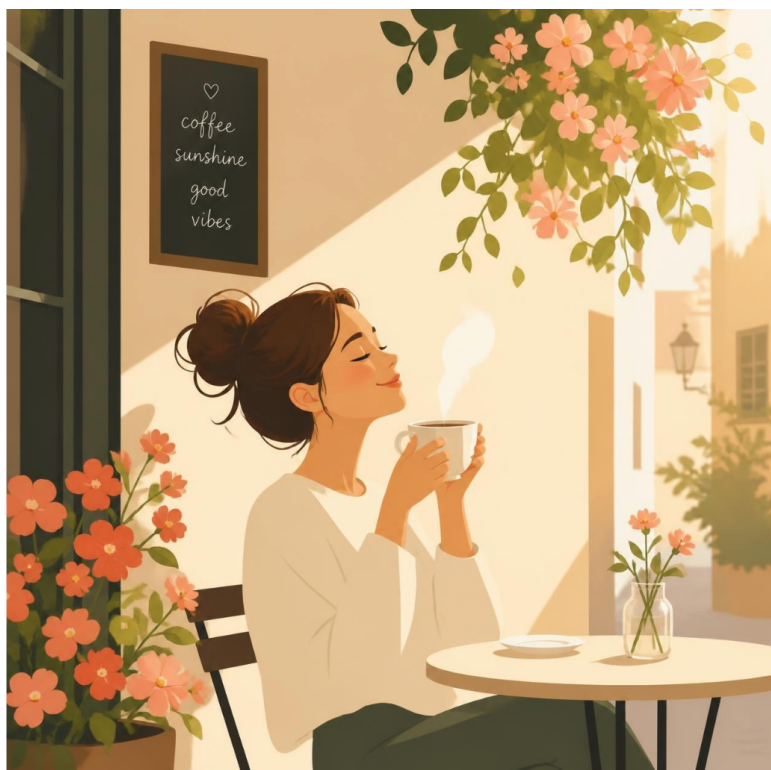
Today's small experiment

Spend some time outdoors reasonably soon after waking. Pick the easiest option for your life:

- ☐ Drink your first tea or coffee outside.
- ☐ Open the curtains and sit near a bright window.
- ☐ Walk the dog or take a short stroll.
- ☐ Step outside and notice the weather for a few minutes.

You do not need to chase sunshine or spend hours outside. You are simply helping your brain recognise: the day has started.

What did you notice about your alertness, mood or sense that the day had begun?



DAY 2 / 07

Anchor the start of your day

Broad consistency matters more than clockwork precision.

Why it matters

The body clock responds well to repeated signals. A broadly consistent waking time can provide a stronger anchor than trying to force a particular bedtime.

Choose a realistic morning anchor

Choose a time you can usually maintain. It does not need to be your earliest possible start.

My broad waking-time window is:

Once awake, choose two signals that help you move into daytime:

- ☐ Open the curtains.
- ☐ Get dressed.
- ☐ Have a drink or breakfast, if that suits you.
- ☐ Go outside.
- ☐ Begin one ordinary daytime task.

A lie-in, late morning or disrupted day does not undo anything. Return to your anchor when life allows.

What helps you feel that your day has properly begun?



DAY 3 / 07

Build natural sleep pressure

Use wakefulness and movement - not exhaustion.

Why it matters

Sleep pressure gradually builds while we are awake. Long periods of inactivity, extra time in bed or frequent daytime sleeping can sometimes reduce that pressure. Movement also helps strengthen the contrast between an active day and a restful night.

Add one manageable period of movement

GENTLE	Stretching · pottering · a short stroll
EVERYDAY	Gardening · housework with music · walking to the shops
PLANNED	A class · swimming · a longer walk · structured exercise

The aim is not to wear yourself out. Choose movement that leaves you feeling pleasantly used rather than depleted.

The movement I chose today was:

How did your body and mind feel afterwards?



Give your thoughts somewhere to land

Make space for thinking before your head reaches the pillow.

Why it matters

Bedtime is often the first quiet moment of the day. When the external noise stops, unfinished thoughts, worries and tasks can suddenly become louder.

Try a ten-minute end-of-day download

WHAT IS STILL ON MY MIND?

IS THERE A NEXT SMALL ACTION?

WHAT CAN WAIT UNTIL TOMORROW?

WHAT IS OUTSIDE MY CONTROL TONIGHT?

I do not need to solve this in bed. I have written it down and can return to it tomorrow.



DAY 5 / 07

Keep living after a poor night

Do not make sleep the price of admission to your life.

Why it matters

When we feel tired, it is understandable to withdraw, cancel plans and conserve energy. But if life becomes organised entirely around sleep, the brain can begin to treat a difficult night as a threat.

Keep one ordinary or enjoyable thing

You can adapt the activity if necessary. The aim is not to prove anything; it is to remain connected to your day.

- ☐ Meet or call someone I enjoy.
- ☐ Go outside for a while.
- ☐ Continue with a planned activity.
- ☐ Spend time on a hobby.
- ☐ Cook or eat something I enjoy.
- ☐ Listen to music, a podcast or an audiobook.

I may feel tired, but I can still have moments of connection, enjoyment and meaning.

What were you still able to do, even if you did not feel at your best?



Change the conversation

Treat frightening predictions as thoughts, not facts.

Why it matters

After a difficult night, the brain can quickly predict that we will not cope, that tonight will be the same, or that something is wrong. These thoughts feel convincing, but they are predictions - not facts.

Try a more balanced response

THE TIRED BRAIN SAYS	A MORE HELPFUL RESPONSE
I will not cope today.	Today may feel harder, but I have managed tired days before.
Tonight will be another disaster.	I cannot know how tonight will go.
My sleep is broken.	My sleep system still works, even when it feels unsettled.
I must sleep tonight.	I can support sleep, but I do not need to force it.

One thought I noticed today:

What would I say to a good friend in the same situation?



DAY 7 / 07

Choose your three anchors

Keep what fits. Leave what does not.

Look back over the week

Which experiments felt natural, helpful, enjoyable or realistic enough to continue? You are not looking for seven new rules. Choose only three gentle signals that fit your life.

MORNING A cue that says: the day has begun.

For example: light outside with my first drink.

My anchor:

DAYTIME A cue that supports wakefulness and life.

For example: a lunchtime walk or one enjoyable activity.

My anchor:

EVENING A cue that lets the day begin to settle.

For example: writing down unfinished thoughts.

My anchor:

Your anchors are supports, not tests. Missing one does not mean you have failed or spoiled your sleep.



AFTER THE SEVEN DAYS

Notice the day, not just the night

The question is not “Did I sleep perfectly?” Sleep naturally varies. Instead, look for changes in the conditions around it.

- ☐ My day feels a little more structured.
- ☐ I am seeing more natural light.
- ☐ I am moving in a way that suits me.
- ☐ My worries have somewhere to go before bedtime.
- ☐ I am less likely to put life on hold after a poor night.
- ☐ I am speaking to myself more kindly.
- ☐ Daytime and night-time feel more distinct.

Sleep is not something you need to chase. Your role is to create supportive conditions; your body's role is to sleep.

A gentle note

This workbook provides general sleep education and is not a substitute for individual medical advice. If sleep difficulties persist, significantly affect daily life, or involve breathing pauses, severe daytime sleepiness or unusual behaviours during sleep, seek advice from an appropriately qualified healthcare professional.



ABOUT LOUISE

Louise Peers is an HCPC-registered Clinical Sleep Scientist and founder of Ashby Sleep Solutions, with more than 35 years' experience in NHS sleep and respiratory services.

Personalised sleep support:
ashbysleepsolutions.co.uk