

Telegraph Columnist

Sleep affects everything we do

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Getting the sleep of your dreams? Is counting sheep just not working? Stop counting sheep and read this.

If you have ever had a bad night's sleep you know how it can affect you physically and mentally. We can usually cope when it is just one night but what if it's more, what if you are continually having poor sleep, waking in the night not being able to get back to sleep or even getting anxious about going to bed and waking up lethargic and not able to function?

Consistently poor sleep can affect our relationships, our ability to concentrate and focus, it reduces our patience threshold, increases poor decision making, and encourages us to binge on unhealthy foods as we crave sugar and caffeine. In short poor sleep can affect every aspect of our life as well as our organ and immune system and is said to be associated with over 40 medical issues.

"Sleep affects everything we do – and everything we do can be improved with a good night's sleep"

In the UK 16 million adults have insomnia with Sheffield being the second city most affected with 36 per cent suffering poor quality sleep. That's a lot of people counting a lot of sheep!!

Sleep heals on every level, spiritual, mental, and physical, and is as important as food and water. You don't have to suffer with poor sleep and accept it as 'the norm'.

Here are a few simple tips that you could try.

Try not to drink caffeine after 2pm. Caffeine has a half-life of 6-8 hours, this is roughly the time it takes for the caffeine level to drop by half.

De-caffeinated does not mean there is no caffeine. For no caffeine look for 'caffeine free' labels and be aware that tea and even some herbal teas have caffeine in them

Keep a notepad and pen by the side of your bed – if



Have a bedtime routine to have a good night's rest



Waking up positive can have a massive impact



Being tired affects every aspect of life

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It is important to limit the amount of 'blue light' exposure before bedtime.

you wake in the night with your mind full of thoughts, jot everything down on paper – empty the mind. Do not use your phone as you may be tempted to check messages.

It is important to limit the amount of 'blue light' exposure before bedtime. Blue light stops the brain from producing melatonin which is the sleep hormone. So, if you can, turn off laptops, phones and iPad at least one hour before bedtime or at least put them on 'night shift'

Have a bedtime routine, it works for kids and it can work for adults. Have a 'power down hour' before bed. Use the time to tidy up, have a shower and get ready for bed

Count backwards from 300 in threes – this works great for kids too! Do a 4-5-6 breathing technique – focusing purely on the breath, breathe in for four, hold the breath for five, release through the mouth for six – simple but effective.

Waking up with positivity.

Most of us wake and reach for our phones then think about the meetings we have, the traffic we've got to face, how tired we feel.

Changing your morning mindset can have a big impact on your day. When the alarm clock goes off, hit the snooze button but instead of falling back to sleep, visualize the day ahead. Imagine yourself getting showered, having a delicious breakfast, travelling to work not being affected by traffic. Arriving

at work ready for your day, think about meetings you have planned and imagine how well these will go, the healthy lunch choice you will make. Imagine in detail your day ahead and then coming home and what you will do.

Think about three things that you are grateful for. It could be your health, another day to make a difference, the person lying next to you, your friends, family, dog or the sun shining.

Whilst driving to work, engage your senses - what can you see, hear, feel? If someone cuts you up, take the higher ground. Reactivity just leads to negativity.

These small acts will not take up very much time but doing them can have an amazing impact on you, your day and those around you. Feeling calmer in your day can help you to feel less anxious about bedtimes.

Get the "Improve Your Sleep, Improve Your Life" programme for £14.95 instead of £95. Key 'Telegraph' at the checkout at www.rise.co.uk/calmrMe-Improve-Your-Sleep until July 31, 2021.