

~ SLEEP HYGIENE FOR ADULTS ~

Compiled by Rus Devorah Wallen, LCSW, ACSW

■ In the 21st Century, sleep is a very underrated, undervalued, and underutilized gift for replenishment and regeneration. These days, people brag about staying up late to overwork or party all night. Our body needs sleep for its systems to stay in their exquisitely balanced synchrony. The recommended sleep time for an adult is 7-9 hours per night. Lack of sleep can adversely alter many body systems, to say nothing about one's emotions, ability to think intelligently, have good reaction time, respond calmly and not overreact, etc. Why We Sleep: Unlocking the Power of Sleep and Dreams by Matthew Walker, Ph. D., is a fascinating read that inspires better sleep hygiene. In the book, he bemoans our sleep-deprived public: *"That low level exhaustion becomes their accepted norm, or baseline. Individuals fail to recognize how their perennial state of sleep deficiency has come to compromise their mental aptitude and physical vitality, including the slow accumulation of ill health. A link between the former and the latter is rarely made in their mind."* Below are some suggestions I've compiled to improve your sleep experience and enhance your overall wellbeing.

Here Are Some General Rules:

- Nap only if necessary, but early in the day and briefly so as not to disrupt your sleep later. If you are a new mom, sleep whenever you can. If the baby is resting, you should rest if you can.
- Avoid caffeine in the late afternoon or evening since it stays in the system. That means coffee, green and black teas, and chocolate. Decaf coffee also has caffeine...Beware!
- Avoid eating a meal before bed – 3 hours after a meal is the suggested time. A light snack is okay. Also, be careful how much you drink so you don't need to awaken frequently for bathroom breaks.
- Although wine and alcohol are sedating, they can cause interrupted sleep. If you do drink, do so a few hours before going to sleep.
- Additionally, nicotine is a stimulant. (We won't discuss the ills of smoking...)
- Exercise is great during the day for a better sleep later, but don't exercise for several hours before bedtime, it may be too stimulating and keep you up.
- Plan to go to sleep at a regular time each night and awaken at the same time daily.
- Create a sleep sanctuary. Reserve your bedroom for sleep, winding down, and intimacy.
- Keep it on the cool side. Wear socks when it's colder but keep the room cool (between 60-68 degrees if possible).
- Detechnologize before bedtime! Forbid T.V., computer, smartphones, tablet, or electronics in the "sleep sanctuary." The "blue light" from electronic screens suppresses melatonin and adversely affects the circadian rhythm. (Warmer, "red" lighting is better.)
- If you have a dimmer or rheostat, diminish the lighting as you're winding down.
- Your room should be dark when you go to sleep.

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Consider putting some of these ideas into your sleep routine.

Plan your time accordingly:

- Resolve anything pressing that's on your mind before going to bed.
- Prepare for tomorrow with scheduling or laying out clothes, etc.
- Try out different bedding or pillows for optimal comfort (textures, weights, etc.).
- Take a bath an hour or so before bedtime. Bathing versus showering brings the warmth of the body out to the skin. This cools the body, slowing its various systems down for sleep.
- Feel free to put relaxing aromatherapy oils in the bath such as: lavender, vetiver, bergamot, cedarwood, Roman chamomile, etc.
- Before bedtime, drink soothing drinks such as: chamomile, motherwort, catnip, valerian root, warm milk, lavender, or "Sleepytime" tea.
- Do calming activities before bed such as: "gratitude journaling" or journaling positive reflections, coloring, saying prayers, Sh'ma, etc.
- Use guided imagery to "travel" in your mind's eye (ear, nose, mouth, body) to a safe, relaxing place in your mind.
- Practice slow, deep breathing (try my Breathing Contest™ - <http://bit.ly/2AaRIEM>).
- Listen to sleep a meditation or drift off to nature sounds with binaural beats (Try my Ocean Surf 15 minute sleep audio. Use headphones for optimal benefit from the binaural beats. - <http://bit.ly/2Bvd8T>).
- Do a body scan, breath or body sensation meditation, etc. (try my Beginner's Meditation on the Breath™ - <http://bit.ly/2zuch6y>).
- Try some sleep music (consider the work of: "Liquid Mind" – Chuck Wild's Musical Healthcare at - <http://www.liquidmindmusic.com>)
- Read something inspiring but calming. Try: In Good Hands – 100 Letters and Talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson on Bitachon: Trusting in G-d (http://www.sie.org/templates/sie/article_cdo/aid/2468492/jewish/In-Good-Hands.htm)
- Spray or put drops of lavender or other relaxing aromatherapy oil or blend (see above regarding bath) on or around your pillow. *(Note to those with sensitive skin: I put the drops or spray by the top of the bed sheet so the oil is not on the pillowcase.)*
- If there is ambient noise disturbing your sleep (i.e., neighbors, weather sounds, etc.), use white noise or a noise machine with nature sounds to block it out.
- Check with your healthcare provider about using supplements such as: melatonin, magnesium, valerian root, suntheanine, etc.
- Consider planning a brief vacation getaway for yourself. Consider a light schedule and minimal obligations. Detechnologize. Go to sleep at a good hour each night and wake up naturally with the sunlight and without the use of the alarm. "Reboot" your circadian rhythm.

~ SLEEP WELL ~