Top Tips To Better Sleep & Better You

We all have unique reasons why we are not satisfied with the quality of our sleep.

For some it could be due to not being able to gain the quality and quality of sleep we need, despite giving ourselves the opportunity. This could be due to reasons such as stress, anxiety, biological causes and sleep disorders.

For others it can be not recognising the importance of sleep and having poor sleep hygiene, along with not giving ourselves the opportunity to sleep. Often, the many things we allow into our schedule do not add up to 24hrs, so the first place we take time from is our sleep.

Please find **10 Tips** below, to start you on the journey of improving your sleep and therefore improving the quality of your life.

And please, talk to your doctor-if you have ongoing troubles with your sleep such as: going to sleep or staying asleep; persistent problems with your mood; excessive daytime sleepiness; restlessness in bed; severe snoring or wakening unrefreshed despite what should be adequate length sleep.

Note: These are some basic tips to start with. The “tips” section of my workshop goes into more detail regarding advice for someone who wakes up in the middle of the night and can’t fall back to sleep, along with other tips.

1. **Be Clear on your Motivation** for improving your sleep: Write it down in the positive tense and look at it every day to keep your focus.

   For example to improve my: energy; motivation; mood; mental health; relationships; productivity; creativity; memory or academic performance etc

2. **Prioritise and Plan Your Sleep:** Having a sufficient sleep window for your personal sleep needs won’t just happen. You may need to assess your priorities and make some changes.

3. **Keep a Sleep Diary:** A daily sleep diary, via an App or The Sleep Connection- printable sleep diary, helps you keep track of how well you are sleeping and helps identify factors that might be helping or hurting your sleep. It will also help you assess the positive impact of implementing new tips or sleep hygiene changes you make.

4. **Consistency is key:** Sleep loves structure and regularity, so aim to keep a consistent sleep and wake time, including on week and weekends. Ensuring a regular rise time is particularly helpful.

5 **Relax before bed:** During the hour before bed, do things that help your mind and body wind down and relax. You could try mindfulness activities, listening to soothing music, or reading a book.

Consistency with these helps, so they become a cue that sleep is coming.

Additionally, block out a buffer zone well before bedtime and sort out any of your concerns from the day. This may mean setting aside a 'worry time' during the day. Use this time to go over the day's activities and work out a plan of action for the next day.

6 **Create a healthy sleep environment:** Make the room dark, as quiet as possible and the right temperature to be comfortable.

7 **Reserve your bed for sleep, not entertainment:** Limit the time you spend in bed to roughly the amount of time you usually spend sleeping. Your mind needs to be in the habit of knowing that if you are in bed, you are there to sleep.

Spend the right amount of time in bed and removing distractions helps to create a strong mental association between your bed and sleep.

If you have a comfortable bed, you may be tempted to spend your leisure time in it, but this can actually cause problems at bedtime. Many poor sleepers spend much more time in bed than their recommended of sleep and this can make fragmented sleep a habit.

8 **Be aware of how technology use before bed impacts your sleep:** Technology has been created with persuasive design in mind, to keep us engaged, entertained, and in a flow state.

This means many people find technology use in bed or near bedtime, to be stimulating for a number of reasons, turning their sleeping space into a cue to be awake rather than to sleep.

And it simply steals your sleep time by remaining on it longer than intended.

Other's actually use technology to facilitate sleep with calming activities, like listening to music or relaxation apps, due to having troubles falling asleep. Removing it altogether may increase rumination, negative thinking and arousal.

Understanding the impact on you and/ or your child will help you navigate best strategies for you such as: prior to bedtime using it for less engaging activities (e.g., watching TV, vs interactive gaming/ social media); having a non-use buffer for a certain period of time before sleep time; not using past intended bedtime; minimizing night disruptions (e.g., flight mode so no); or better still removing from your bedroom altogether and use an alarm clock instead of your phone.

9 **Be aware that alcohol, caffeine and cigarettes can all impact your sleep:** Reduce or avoid accordingly.

Alcohol may help you to get off to sleep, but disrupts your sleep during the night. Caffeine (tea, coffee, cola drinks) and the nicotine in cigarettes are stimulants that can keep you awake.

10 **Be aware of the Impact of daytime naps:** Understanding why you need a nap is important, as sleeping during the day can make it much more difficult to sleep well at night. Napping can lessen your sleep drive, throwing off your sleep schedule and make it harder to get to sleep when you want to. So it's best to focus on improving your night time sleep first to avoid the need for naps.

However if a nap is necessary, limit this to around twenty minutes and in the early afternoon so it's not too close to bedtime.

You may also want to avoid late-day or evening naps, because they can lessen your "drive" for sleep and make it harder to fall asleep when you want to at night. If you must, grab a short nap in the afternoon.

Professional help

However, despite implementing new ideas to improve our sleep, some of us may need additional help and I encourage you to seek this out
So please, talk to your doctor-if you feel you have troubles with your sleep such as: going to sleep or staying asleep; persistent problems with your mood; excessive daytime sleepiness; restlessness in bed; severe snoring or wakening unrefreshed despite what should be adequate length sleep.

Where to get professional help

To see a sleep specialist or sleep psychologist you usually require a referral from your doctor. Some online programs can be self-referred, others require a referral.

Online:

- **Sleep Shack:** An online program for sleep problems in pre-teens and teens.
- **Sleepio:** An online program tailored for adults, to help improve poor sleep. Sleepio-Expert articles & guides are highly recommended reading.
- **TM Insomnia Treatment:** Personalised insomnia Treatment

Online and In-person:

- **Winksleep Online & Wink Sleep Clinic:** We can help adults experiencing insomnia - teens falling asleep late and hard to wake on school mornings - or school kids needing their parents nearby to sleep - or young kids or babies that haven't yet learned the skills to sleep well
- **Woolcock Clinic: Sleep Coaching & Group classes:** Our experienced sleep coach provides individual consultations and group insomnia classes
- **TM Insomnia Treatment:** Personalised insomnia treatment

In Person Sydney

- **Woolcock Paediatric Sleep Clinic:** Australia's specialist Paediatric and Adolescent Sleep Service which assesses and manages all sleep disorders in children and teenagers. The team includes sleep specialists, psychologists, psychiatrists, and ENT's.
- **Woolcock Adult Sleep Clinic:** A world-leading medical centre, based in Glebe, specialising in the diagnosis and treatment of all sleep and breathing disorders.
- **Woolcock Insomnia Clinic:** Sleep Coaching & Group classes
- **Womens Health Road -Frenchs Forrest**

Other **In Person Options** for Sydney and Interstate

- Your doctor will be able to point you in the right direction for the most relevant and local sleep specialists and/ or sleep psychologists.

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