



W o r k b o o k

# The Guide to Sleep

This ultimate workbook is designed to help you understand and manage your sleep.

Written by

TU Dublin Student  
Counselling Service





# Introduction

What are sleep problems? Everyone at one time or another has problems with their sleep. It is very common. Where sleep problems have been going on for a while it is sometimes called insomnia.

It is difficult to judge whether you are getting enough sleep. Different people need different amounts of sleep. This can depend on their age and activity levels, for example. It's important to remember that going without a bit of sleep is not harmful or damaging.

There are different types and stages of sleep. We cycle through these during the night. These range from light, drowsy sleep through deep sleep to dream sleep, or so called 'Rapid Eye Movement' sleep. During these phases we physically and mentally recover. We process memories, heal and grow.

Sleep problems can be broadly categorised into three types:

- Problems getting to sleep - lying awake and not being able to fall asleep.
- Problems staying asleep - waking up early in the morning.
- Poor quality sleep - not feeling refreshed by the sleep you do get.

# What causes sleep problems?

## Life Events

Events in your life may be distracting you and causing worries that you go back to whilst trying to get to sleep. Problems with sleep may be secondary to another difficulty (e.g. stress, anxiety or low mood), which may be interfering with your ability to relax and get to sleep. Managing the underlying problems may help you overcome your difficulties with sleep.

## Thinking Styles

Oftentimes the thought of not getting enough sleep can be more distressing than the actual lack of sleep. If you have a tendency to catastrophise and worry about the likelihood and consequences of not sleeping you may be inhibiting your sleep. You may find yourself thinking over difficulties and keeping your mind active with unhelpful thoughts.

## Behavioural Explanations

Developing poor habits around sleep, such as not having a clear bedtime routine, can cause problems. For example, not taking time to relax before bedtime. It is also important to consider the environmental factors, such as temperature and noise, that may cause discomfort or distraction.

Associations can build over time and we can relate our bedrooms or bed with something other than actually sleeping. This can happen when we spend a lot of time in bed awake or watching TV for example.

## Physical issues

Some people experience different physiological symptoms that disrupt their sleep (e.g. needing to use the toilet regularly, pain). Some medications, drugs, alcohol can impact sleep quality. Consuming caffeine or nicotine close to bedtime can impair your sleep. As you age, your sleep pattern is likely to change and you are likely to have poorer quality and less sleep.

# What maintains the sleep problems?

Often problems build up in our behaviour which can be unhelpful and actually end up maintaining a problem. A number of habits can develop when we have difficulties sleeping. These can make it more difficult to overcome.

- Predicting that you will not sleep well even before you go to bed.
- Not having a good bedtime routine to relax and unwind at the end of the day.
- Going to bed when you don't feel at all sleepy.
- Beginning to associate being in bed with being awake.
- Not keeping the bed and the bedroom a quiet, peaceful and tidy space.
- Having woken during the night, resorting to an activity that is not going to help you get back to sleep, e.g. scrolling on Instagram/TikTok.
- Repeatedly checking the time to see how long you've been awake.
- Worrying about the consequences that your lack of sleep might have.
- Trying to catch up with sleep, and as a result, confusing your sleep pattern.



# Understanding your Sleep Problems

## Can't Sleep

Thoughts - "I'm never going to get any sleep"

### Behaviours

- Lying awake in bed
- Watching the clock

### Emotions

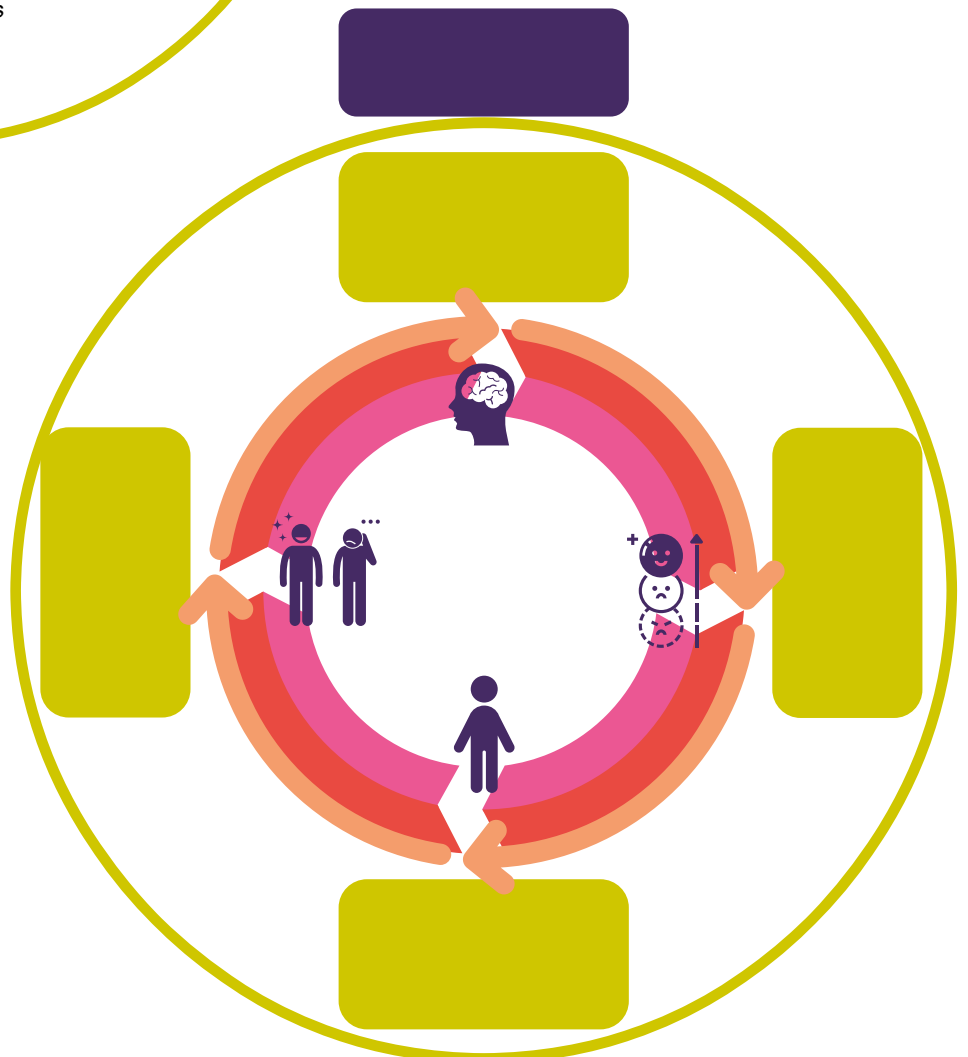
- Frustration
- Stress
- Worry

### Body Feelings

- Sweating
- Irritable
- Lack of Energy

This diagram shows how our thoughts, emotions, body feelings and behaviour all influence each other. In fact, they are so closely intertwined that it is often hard to be aware of them all. Consequently, we feel them all in a moment, as one experience. This shows us how adjustments to our physical state, actions, and how we talk to ourselves in our heads all impact greatly on how we feel. If we change all three, then our emotional state will change too.

Fill in your own experience



## How can good sleep management help you?

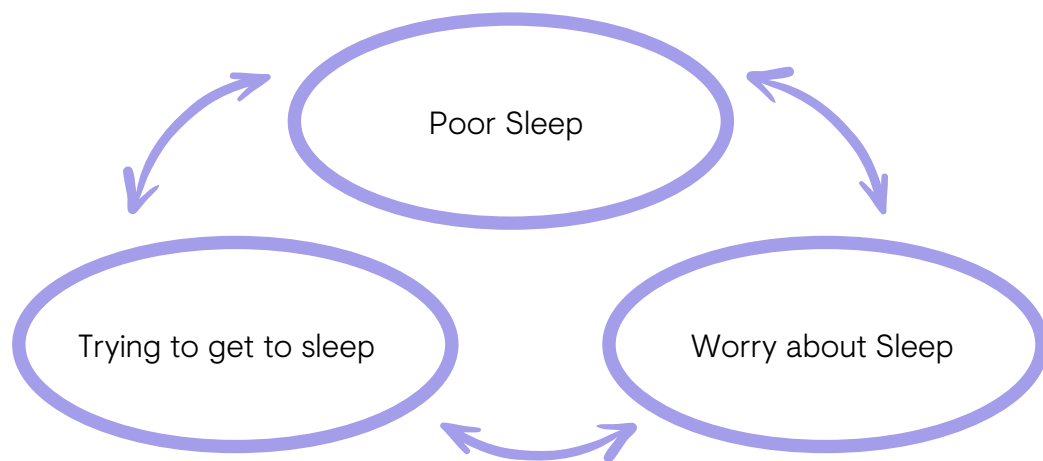
Good sleep management can help with:

- Regulating mood
- Increasing energy levels
- Concentration
- Capacity to cope with distressing symptoms



## Letting go of the struggle to sleep

Sometimes we enter a vicious cycle when experiencing sleep problems as shown below. It is common to try hard to avoid unwanted thoughts, emotions and physical sensations associated with not sleeping. This struggle can make things worse.



It may be more helpful to adopt a more accepting attitude towards difficulty sleeping. The greater willingness to experience poor sleep results in fewer struggles, less arousal and therefore greater levels of sleepiness.

# Guidelines for Better Sleep

Sleeping well is a habit that you can learn! Small changes can have big effects. Start today by following these rules:



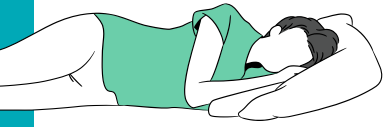
- **Take care of your body**
  - Do not drink caffeine: no tea, coffee, or coca-cola after 4 o'clock
  - Do not eat a big or spicy meal late in the evening
  - Do not go to bed hungry
  - Avoid alcohol as it interferes with sleep
- **Physical exercise, such as a brisk walk, in the late afternoon can help to make your body tired and help you to sleep. Try to do some exercise every day.**
- **Sleep only at night-time and do not have day-time naps, no matter how tired you feel. Naps keep the problem going by making it harder for you to get to sleep the next night.**
- **Having a regular bedtime routine teaches your body when it's time to go to sleep.**
  - Have a soothing drink like camomile tea or a milky drink
  - Have a bath, or a routine of washing your face and brushing your teeth
  - Go to bed at same time each night
  - When in bed think of nice things (e.g. think of 5 nice things that happened that day – they might be big or small, such as a nice conversation, seeing the sunshine, or hearing nice music on the radio)
  - Do a relaxed breathing exercise (one hand on stomach the other on your chest, deliberately slow your breathing, breathe deeply in your stomach instead of high in your chest)
  - Try and wake up the same time every day, even if this is tiring to begin with
- **Coping with bad dreams can be difficult. Some people don't like relaxation before going to sleep, or are scared of letting go. If that is you, try these preparation techniques instead:**
  - Prepare yourself in case you have bad dreams by thinking of a bad dream then think of a different ending for it. Practice this new ending many times before going to sleep.
  - Before going to sleep prepare to re-orient yourself when you wake from a bad dream.
  - Remind yourself that you are at home, that you are safe. Imagine your street, buses, local shops.
  - Put a damp towel or a bowl of water by the bed to splash your face, place a special object by the bed, such as a photograph, or a small soft toy.
  - Practice imagining yourself waking up from a bad dream and reorienting yourself to the present, to safety by splashing your face, touching special object, having a bottle of rose or lavender essential oil to sniff, going to window to see surroundings.
  - When you wake up from a bad dream- move your body if you can and reorient yourself immediately (touching object, wetting face, going to the window, talk to yourself in a reassuring way)
- **Make your bedroom a pleasant place to be**
  - Get a nightlight
  - Keep it clean and tidy
  - Introduce pleasant smells such as a drop of lavender oil onto the pillow
  - Get extra pillows
  - Make sure that your home is safe e.g. doors locked, windows closed.

**REMEMBER: BED IS FOR SLEEPING, SO IF YOU CANNOT SLEEP AFTER 30 MINUTES, GET UP AND DO ANOTHER ACTIVITY ELSEWHERE SUCH AS READING OR LISTENING TO MUSIC (TRY AND AVOID TV AS IT CAN WAKE YOU UP). AFTER 15 MINUTES RETURN TO BED AND TRY TO SLEEP AGAIN. IF YOU STILL CAN'T SLEEP AFTER 30 MINUTES GET UP AGAIN. REPEAT THIS ROUTINE AS MANY TIMES AS NECESSARY AND ONLY USE YOUR BED FOR SLEEPING IN.**

# Breathing Exercise for Sleep

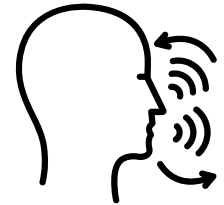
This is a simple technique involving slowing down and focusing on our breathing. It can be particularly helpful for those who feel lightheaded or tension when they are feeling anxious when falling asleep.

While this exercise is helpful for helping you to relax when trying to sleep, you can also use it any other time you might feel anxious or tense.



1. Get into a comfortable position and bring your attention to your breath

2. Stabilize your breathing - Try breathing in for 3 seconds, holding your breath for 2 seconds and breathing out for 3 seconds and repeat for a few minutes until you feel more relaxed.



# Muscle Relaxation Exercise for Sleep

Tension can often build up when we feel upset or stressed. Reducing this physical tension can help you to relax in general. During progressive muscle relaxation, you will focus on each muscle group in your body, first tensing selected muscles for a few seconds and then slowly relaxing them over the course of 20 to 30 seconds.

To practice progressive muscle relaxation at home, lie down in a quiet space, free of distractions, and breathe steadily as you progress in the following order:

- **Face:** Lift your eyebrows to wrinkle your forehead, and then slowly relax and let the tension out of your forehead. Close your eyes tightly and then relax and slowly open them. Tense your lips, cheeks, and jaw muscles by grimacing, and then feel a sense of serenity come over your face as you relax all your facial muscles at once.
- **Shoulders and arms:** Bring your shoulders toward your ears, tensing your muscles, and then slowly let them relax. Starting with your upper arms, flex your biceps, and then relax, letting the tension out of your muscles. Tense your forearms, and then slowly let them relax.
- **Chest and abdomen:** Take a deep breath and tense the muscles within your chest and abdomen, and then slowly exhale as you relax these muscles.
- **Back:** Flex the muscles in your back as you arch them on the floor or bed, and then relax and let the stress and tension go out of your back muscles.
- **Hips and buttocks:** Tighten the muscles in your hips and buttocks, and then slowly release the tension and feel the stress leaving this area of your body.
- **Legs and feet:** Flex your leg muscles, squeezing your legs together, and then slowly relax. Flex your feet for a few seconds, and then relax them. Curl your toes, and then slowly let them return to neutral.

After you have systematically tightened and relaxed all the muscle groups in your body, you should feel relaxed and calm.

As with any new technique, progressive muscle relaxation takes some time to master.

# Distraction Exercises for Sleep

## Using visualization to relax and sleep better

Visualization can be a powerful technique to help you unwind, relieve stress, and even fall asleep. Instead of focusing on your anxious, fearful images, visualization expands your ability to focus on calming and restful images.

You should first imagine in your mind's eye places that you have experienced where you felt deep relaxed and peaceful. It may have been at the ocean, sitting in a favorite room, or walking in the mountains. Imagine closing your eyes and walking to that place again. Notice as many sensory details as you can, such as the time of day, the colors, warmth or coldness, texture, sounds, and any people or animals present. Then visualize this place for a few minutes before you go to bed.

## Breathe in the night sky

Starting from one hundred, count down with each breath. Let your breath be natural and don't try to manipulate it. There's a good chance that you'll fall asleep or induce deep relaxation before you get to zero. If you lose track, start back at one hundred. Alternatively, start from one, counting up with each breath.

Now here's the visualization part.

1. On the inhale, imagine your body filling with a vast darkness, the type of darkness outside your bed and house, the night sky.
2. Visualize that you're breathing in the entire night sky, pitch black with shining stars.
3. Let your mind be vast and open just as the sky.
4. Imagine that those tiny stars that you have inhaled, move around your entire body to dissolve all the tense spots present in your body.
5. Last but not least when exhaling, visualize smoke coming out through your nostrils, like a sleeping dragon, view the smoke as remnants of the tensions leaving you.
6. Feel yourself completely relaxed, and allow yourself to doze off.



## The Bench at the Train Station

1. Visualize sitting on a bench at a train station, just watching the trains arrive and depart.
2. Our pure awareness is the bench at the station.
3. All the mental activities – the myriad thoughts, feelings, sensations, ideas, memories, plans and so forth are the trains.
4. Sooner or later, our mindfulness will lapse and we will get on one of those trains. We will be lost in thought, having completely forgotten about our meditation.
5. However, the moment you realize that you are on the train, you can magically transport yourself back to the station, back to the serene bench.
6. Keep watching without judgment, with an open mind and an open heart.



# Bedtime Routine

Before I fall asleep

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## Remember!

- Don't give up! Any changes you make might take at least two weeks to start working as your body needs time to adjust to the new routine. It may even take months if you're making big changes to your lifestyle and plans for wellbeing.
- It is very common to have sleep problems, you are not alone. Try talking to someone about how you feel, they might have had similar experiences.
- If your sleep cannot be improved then don't panic, any kind of rest is helpful as it will be part of one of the natural stages of sleep.



## Why not try our SilverCloud module on sleep?



Space for Sleep is an online program that aims to improve the symptoms of sleep difficulties. A member of the counselling team can support you on your journey through the program, with regular check-ins to review their progress and offer guidance. Or you can choose to do it by yourself.



## Contacting the SCS

Address:

Rathdown House,  
TU Grangegorman  
Campus

Email:

[counselling.city@tudublin.ie](mailto:counselling.city@tudublin.ie)

Phone:

(086) 0820543

Website:

<https://www.tudublin.ie/for-students/student-services-and-support/student-wellbeing/counselling-service/>