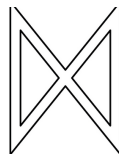


The Art of Getting A Good Night's sleep



Cultivating the Practice of Restoration



Dagaz Counseling & Psychotherapy PLLC

drjudibrowne.com



We all struggle with sleep from time to time.

Sometimes it's the difficulty in falling asleep at night or maybe it is waking up in the morning without hitting the snooze button nine times! It could also be waking up during the night and then having trouble getting back to sleep.

When sleep issues occasionally happen we can typically deal with it and bounce back. However, when sleep issues become chronic, night after night, we end up paying the price physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Sleep is essential to our overall well-being and there is no way around that!

You know the benefits of a good night sleep – you can feel it when you wake up refreshed in the morning and in the quality of your day. Good sleep can add that extra pep in your step. A regular and sufficient sleep schedule can significantly impact your life in a multitude of positive ways.

Physically: Having good consistent sleep will increase your body's immunity by allowing it to heal inflammation and the effects of stress. Sleep also reduces your chance of experiencing a heart attack and stroke. If that isn't enough of a reason, good consistent sleep can assist in weight loss.

Mentally: Sleep is essential for memory and concentration, and getting enough good sleep improves productivity. Sleep will improve your decision making ability and can help with critical thinking.

Emotionally: When you are well rested, you are less moody—but you already knew that. Sleep is essential in reducing anxiety, depression, and pain. Though it should be noted that too much sleep can be linked to depression.



WARNING!

If you are looking for a quick fix for getting good consistent sleep this information may not be for you. However, if you are committed to being in charge of your own health and creating changes that promote a better quality of life and a better version of you, you will find value in the suggestions offered below as you incorporate them into your lifestyle.



Please keep in mind that it is not necessary to use all of these suggestions or implement them all over night. Choose a few of that resonate with you and begin to include them into your routine for a few weeks and observe your results and then add or swap from there. You may find that all you need are a few simple tweaks in your bedtime routine and you're sleeping like a baby.

Remember the trick to making any lasting change is to recognize that you are retraining and rewiring your brain, and like learning any new skill, it takes repetition.

As changes occur in your schedule and your life—and they will—you can change up what works best for you. Keep in mind, your goal of having consistent good quality sleep will create enormous benefits in your life. After all, what is more important than your – physical, mental and emotional health?

SO LET'S BEGIN...

Maintain a regular sleep and waking schedule. This requires going to bed and getting up at the same time every day—including the weekends. This will help train your body to create a regular sleep cycle. Be as strict as possible in the first few weeks because if you're honest with yourself and you shoot for going to sleep or getting up *around* the same time, it will morph into being later and later. Remember the bed should only be used for sleep and “intimate activities,” not eating or watching TV. In fact, if you have a TV in your bedroom, remove it or unplug it, don't let it steal your sleep.

Don't take naps. Don't do it! Napping during the day can interfere in your ability to fall asleep at night. So push through and avoid taking naps unless you have a chronic illness and need the rest, feel that you are coming down with an illness, or are pregnant or have a napping baby at home. In the latter case, nap when the baby is napping because you probably need the extra sleep!

If you **awaken during the night** and can't fall asleep within twenty minutes, get out of bed and read something dense and boring—like a book on taxes—until you feel sleepy. Do a Google search beforehand for the most boring books and have a couple on standby for when this occurs. It is also recommended to refrain from checking the clock time as that can increase your anxiety about being awake. And NO screen time of any kind!

Regular exercise can have a positive impact on your overall sleep. All you need is about 30 minutes of exercise a day. If you like running, tennis, or other higher aerobic activities, earlier in the day is optimal for these activities so they don't interfere with sleep. Moderate aerobic exercise like yoga, walking, or stretching are best done later in the day and 3 to 4 hours before bed. If you don't regularly exercise, it might be worth blocking out time in your schedule to help integrate it into your lifestyle. Finding an exercise buddy can help with your accountability and add to the fun.



Create an Environment that Invites Sleep

Hygge is the Scandinavian art of creating spaces that cultivate comfort and coziness. Adapting aspects of this practice into your bedroom can help to create an environment that promotes sleep. Search Pinterest or Instagram for some hygge ideas.

Your bedroom should be a quiet and comfortable space. If possible, invest in a good mattress and high quality sheets and blankets. Think of your bed as your nest for restoration—after all, that is exactly what it is.

Maintaining a **room temperature between 60–70°F** is ideal for sleeping. Most people find around the middle of this range to be optimal, as it allows one to cuddle-up beneath a cozy blanket. Experiment and find your optimum temperature.

Replace the **lighting** in your bedroom with pink or red light bulbs, as this color range promotes sleepiness. Your room may have the bordello feel, which could be interesting to note if this affects your dreams. It could be fun!

A **sound machine** can be an invaluable tool if you have difficulties falling asleep or are a light sleeper, as they muffle distracting noise in the environment. Many sound machines provide the option of choosing from the sound of white noise to that of the ocean or a rainfall. The action of consistently turning it on every night before bed trains your brain to associate the sound of the machine to preparing for sleep. Many people use an **oscillating fan** for both the sound effect and the added coolness to the room, and others have found a **room air filter** helpful.

If you have not yet discovered the world of **Solfeggio frequencies** now is the time! These incredible tones are available on YouTube, iTunes, and Spotify. Search for 417HZ, 528HZ, or 639HZ, and the results are endless. Having music with these frequencies playing in the background is a wonderful way to unwind in the evening as they improve mood, induce calmness, and even aid in healing. Listening to Solfeggio frequencies during your bedtime routine or while falling asleep can help slow down your brain waves for rest. They can also be listened to with headphones while in bed for meditation or to help prepare your mind for dreaming.

Eye masks are helpful in blocking out light and signaling the brain to release melatonin. Weighted eye masks provide gentle pressure that helps the muscles around the eye to relax. When paired with **earplugs**, eye masks can help light sleepers enjoy more quality sleep. If you feel uncomfortable having your eyes covered while you sleep, try a mask for the first few minutes to transition into deeper relaxation, then remove it.

A **weighted blanket** provides a deep pressure stimulation that feels like a warm hug. Think of it like swaddling for adults! These heavy blankets are calming and have been shown to help many people (and pets) with anxiety, depression, and chronic pain to sleep better. It should be noted that if you suffer from claustrophobia you might want to pass on the weighted blanket.



Preparation for Restorative Sleep: Training Your Brain to Prepare for Sleep

Taking a hot shower or bath for 10 to 20 minutes, or soaking in a hot bath within ninety minutes of turning off the lights, is a great night time ritual to create. Using a bath bomb or Epsom salts further promotes sleep and relieves muscle tension due to the magnesium content. No problem if you prefer showers over baths—make it a nightly hot shower.

Put on some **pajamas** or specific clothes just for sleeping. They can be a comfortable pair of sweats but you can *only* wear them for sleeping—no lounging around in them. Remember, the goal is to train your brain with signals that are associated with sleep. Wearing pajamas all day long can confuse your gray matter.

Caffeine is one of my favorite words in the English language, and for sleep it is best to avoid caffeine after 2:00 pm. Be aware of the caffeine content in tea and other food, beverages, and medication—it just might keep you up at night.

Sipping a warm cup of soothing **herbal tea** is another beautiful nightly ritual. There are many herbs that promote calm and sleep. Blends that contain several of these herbs can create a synergistic effect and are available commercially.

A few favorite bedtime herbs include:

- Chamomile
- Hops
- Lavender
- Lemon balm
- Passion flower
- Valerian

Avoid consuming **alcohol** in any form for 4 to 6 hours before bed. Hollywood has provided us with images—and created norms—of transitioning from work to an evening glass of wine, enjoying a Happy Hour cocktail, or even sipping a nightcap prior to bed. The truth is that alcohol is one of the main culprits in the epidemic of insomnia and restless sleep. You may be attracted by the relaxing and sedative effects of alcohol, but the harsh reality is alcohol is NOT compatible with restful and restorative sleep. Alcohol impacts circadian rhythms for up to a week afterwards. It suppresses melatonin and interferes with REM sleep. Alcohol makes for lighter and more restless sleep, morning fatigue, and increases the experience of frequent waking, night sweats, nightmares, sleep walking, and headaches.

If you drink, even minimally, try abstaining for 4 to 6 weeks and notice if there are any changes in the quality and quantity of sleep you experience.

If you experience chronic insomnia or sleep apnea, avoid alcohol altogether. Seriously.



Consume a light snack before bedtime and NOT the whole container of ice cream!

Having a small snack before bed can actually help you sleep more soundly. But not just any snack. Here are some foods that won't interfere with your sleep, but you can do an internet search for others that are more appealing to you.

- Oatmeal
- Popcorn (Air-popped is best. Watch the oil!)
- Peanut butter and jelly sandwich
- Banana and peanut butter
- Hummus and whole wheat crackers or veggies
- Pumpkin seeds
- A handful of nuts

Supplements

Supplements can help you fall asleep and stay asleep without feeling drowsy the next day. Additionally, some supplements can take the edge off anxiety and depression, and can aid in memory and learning. They may not have the strong effect of prescription, or over-the-counter sleep aids, but they certainly don't have the negative side effects either. While you may experience their positive effects immediately, some may take a few nights or weeks to kick in fully, especially if your body is flooded with synthetic chemicals.

As with all medications, please consult with your health professional especially if you are pregnant, nursing, or currently taking any medications to prevent unwanted interactions. Do your own research on these substances—and any substance you put in or on your body—as you are ultimately responsible for your own health and well-being. Be responsible and never give the power away to another!

Magnesium should be the first supplement you consider for sleep. It is essential for every cell in your body to function efficiently, yet most of us are magnesium deficient. Magnesium helps in the regulation of neurotransmitters, including the hormone melatonin, and it binds with GABA to calm the body. Not only does magnesium improve sleep, it helps with constipation, anxiety, depression and pain.

You can find magnesium in many forms, including capsules, powders, lotions, and in Epsom salts (which is why a soaking in a tub with some Epsom salts, or a bath bomb, can be such a lovely bedtime ritual). You will find many sleep supplements contain one of the several forms of magnesium listed as an ingredient.

5-HTP is required for your brain to produce serotonin, which helps to produce melatonin. Thus, 5-HTP is a great supplement for mood, hormone regulation, sexual behavior, learning, and of course sleep. Many sleep supplements contain 5-HTP for its serotonin effects.



L-Theanine is a wonderful relaxation supplement and one of the reasons why so many people love to sip green tea. L-theanine boosts GABA, dopamine, and serotonin, so it is great for stress, anxiety, depression, memory, and creativity. Biohackers love it. It promotes relaxation and sleep without next-morning drowsiness. L-theanine can also counteract the effects of caffeine, to the benefit of coffee drinkers.

GABA (gamma butyric acid) is one of my personal favorite supplements for reducing anxiety, and due to its calming effects on the brain, it improves sleep. If you struggle with chronic sleep problems, depression, or any mood disorders, your GABA levels are most likely below normal. GABA helps muscles relax and the body to feel drowsy. It can help you fall to sleep faster, stay asleep longer, and feel energized in the morning. GABA works well in combination with 5-HTP or L-theanine.

Glycine is another wonderful supplement that helps your body produce serotonin. Glycine can improve the length and quality of your sleep and help you feel rested in the morning. It can also reduce anxiety and improve memory or any other function that your body requires serotonin for. While it can be found in capsules and in blends, it has a sweet taste which makes it a nice sweetener for your evening tea if you obtain it in a powdered form.

CBD doesn't have the quantity of studies to support its benefits on sleep as the previous supplements do, but since it aids in reducing anxiety and pain, one would think that future studies will validate its effectiveness for sleep. CBD is available in a variety of dosages and forms like oil, gummies, creams, teas, oral sprays, and patches.

Melatonin is most beneficial if you do shift work, are experiencing jet lag, or want to switch to an earlier sleep schedule. If you don't fit into any of these categories, you might find one of the other supplements more beneficial. Melatonin can also have side effects such as drowsiness, headaches, nausea, weight gain, depression, and even mild anxiety. Produced in the pineal gland, melatonin affects circadian rhythms, which is why it is so beneficial for shift work and jet lag; however, it is worth considering if your body's own production of melatonin will be affected if this supplement is taken on a regular basis. It might make more sense to increase your serotonin levels to help your body to produce the melatonin it needs.

Essential Oils Essential oils are wonderful little helpers in the quest of mental balance and restorative sleep. Try adding essential oils to your bath or body lotion or spray them with a mister onto your pillow or eye mask. Use solitary scents or a blend specifically created for sleep.

Popular oils known for their relaxation and sleep properties include:

- Bergamot
- Cedarwood
- Lavender
- Roman Chamomile
- Sandalwood
- Vetiver
- Ylang ylang



Cultivate a Mindset that invites Sleep

There are a multitude of benefits in cultivating a **Gratitude Journal** practice. Studies show the act of maintaining one can reduce anxiety and depression. A regular gratitude practice is a great tool for counterbalancing frustration, resentment, envy, and feeling stuck. Writing down the things that you are most thankful for that happened that day can actually help in improving the amount of restorative sleep you get.

Use a real journal for this activity, not your phone. Pick up a cheap spiral notebook and keep it under your pillow or on your nightstand as a reminder to use it. This journal can also serve as a reminder of the people and things you are grateful for when you are feeling low, which makes it a valuable addition to your self-care tool kit.

Before turning the lights off, write down three to five things from that day for which you are grateful. Things like: getting a great parking spot, a good conversation with a coworker, stable internet connection, hot running water, green ink pens—yes, even the small things! In fact, sometimes the smaller the better. When we consciously acknowledge all the little joys and gifts we encounter during the day, it instills a sense of gratitude and raises our vibration. Give it a try—commit to keeping a gratitude journal for 21 days and feel the results for yourself.

Unplug from the Internet. It takes at least 40 minutes for your brain to unwind from the day's stimulation especially if you are in front of a screen for most of that time. A solid bedtime routine would include turning the phone off or putting it in airplane mode about an hour before you plan on turning off the lights for sleep. This allows you time to bathe, sip tea, journal and transition from the day's events and to prepare for sleep and hopefully dreamtime. This is a challenge for many as we have become so addicted to our devices, but if sleep is of value to you this may be non-negotiable.

Turning off the WiFi router at night is a great way to insure that you won't be tapping into social media at 2am. You can use an outlet timer to turn off and on the router so it won't interfere with your sleep. Not having the WiFi on during the night also helps in allowing your brain to completely relax and achieve REM sleep. There are studies that find Electromagnetic Frequencies (EMF) interfere with brain waves, so keeping the router on all the time may not only be keeping you up at night it may be reducing your attention and your ability to concentration. Welcome to the Smarthome!

Bottom line: set up a nighttime routine that works for you and stick to it. And remember that repetition trains your brain for sleep.

Finally, when you are lying in your bed take a few deep, slow breaths. Consciously feel your body and appreciate your bed—the mattress, sheets, and blankets—appreciate all the things in your bedroom, bathroom, and home that you have worked to obtain. Bring to mind the people you love, and even some you don't, and send some loving thoughts and energy their way. Recognise that this very night you are safe and loved. Drift off using your imagination to create a beautiful dream.

Check List

- ☐ Maintain a regular sleep and waking schedule
- ☐ Don't nap
- ☐ Keep bed only for sleep
- ☐ Create an environment for sleep
- ☐ Keep room temperature between 60 and 70 degree
- ☐ Lighting (low ambient or red)
- ☐ Sound machine
- ☐ Solfeggio frequency music
- ☐ Weighted blanket
- ☐ Eye mask
- ☐ Hot shower or bath within 90 minutes before bedtime
- ☐ Wear pajamas
- ☐ Avoid caffeine after 2:00pm
- ☐ Avoid alcohol 4 to 6 hours before bed or altogether
- ☐ Have a light snack before bed
- ☐ Sip a warm cup of herbal tea
- ☐ Supplements that promote sleep
- ☐ Essential oils
- ☐ Gratitude Journal
- ☐ Unplug from the internet

Sweet Dreams!