



CBT techniques to help you sleep

By Emma Symons

Most of us will experience a lack of quality sleep at some time, and for some this can be a perpetual problem. Being a new parent, being on-call or feeling the effects of stress and anxiety, sleep is often one of the first things to suffer and it can have severe effects on your overall health.

There's a formula that is used by cognitive behavioural therapists to tackle the majority of sleep difficulties. The two main interventions are sleep hygiene and stimulus control. Sleep hygiene is about forming good sleep habits and stimulus control works to strengthen the connection between bed and sleep behaviour. These two interventions will help you unwind more quickly when you go to bed and sleep more deeply. The acronym 'Sound Asleep' is used to help remember the techniques.

Stimulus control

Sleep: In order to strengthen the connection with the bed and sleeping you need to associate it with sleeping. The more additional things that you do in bed (read, eat, use smartphone, watch TV) the less we associate bed with sleep.

Observe: Whilst in bed observe the feel of the mattress beneath you, the comfort of the pillows, the sense of being 'absorbed' into the mattress. Try to make all the sensations associated with the bed and sleep as vivid as possible.

Unable to get to sleep: If you can't sleep after 15 to 20 minutes, apply the quarter of an hour rule. Get up, get out of bed and go to a different room and do something not stimulating for 20 to 30 minutes, then return to bed. If you are still unable to get to sleep after 20 to 30 minutes get up again. Repeat until you sleep. This is hard but necessary. If you lie in bed unable to sleep for long periods you start to associate your bed with wakefulness and maybe agitation. The only way to break the cycle is by re-aligning the bed-sleep association.

No napping: In order to strengthen the connection between night-time sleep behaviour and bed, you need to ban any daytime napping. It's essential to associate both the night (and the bed) with sleep and the day with wakefulness.

Decide your routine and stick to it: If you go to bed at 11pm, always have a fixed rising time no matter how well you sleep. The amount of sleep we need differs from person to person but if you don't have a fixed bed time and rising time the risk is that sleep starts to 'seep' into the day and you lose that valuable association between sleep behaviour and night-time/bed.

Sleep Hygiene

Alcohol and nicotine: Both will interfere with sleep so limit these before bed.

Sleep environment: Make sure the bedroom is dark enough, comfy enough (pillows, mattress), quiet enough with good air quality and appropriate temperature for sleep.

Leave it out: Leave laptops, smart phones, TVs and paperwork out of the bedroom.

Exercise regularly: Around an hour's exercise a day will help, but leave a 'buffer' period of at least 2 hours before bed.

Eat a balanced diet: Wakefulness can be caused by hunger, but going to bed too full can also cause sleeplessness. Make sure you eat a balanced diet throughout the day and aim to leave at least 2 hours before going to bed after eating a large meal. If you're up late and haven't eaten for four to five hours, a small snack before bed might prevent wakefulness due to hunger.

Plan for sleep: Have a pre-bedtime wind down. Think of it as your very own 'bath, story, bed'. Children sleep well when they have a specific routine associated with bed time, and...so do we. As such, try to develop a 'wind down' routine at least 60 minutes before you go to bed. This period should involve ceasing doing stimulating activities (e.g. paperwork) and instead engaging in more relaxing activities such as having a bath, listening to relaxing music etc.

A good night's sleep is essential to relieving stress and improving our wellbeing so give these techniques a try and see if your sleep improves.



Organic v. non-organic

with Elaine

It's well documented that organic food is better for you: it's more environmentally friendly, better for animal welfare and no pesticides are used. However, buying organic is almost always the more expensive option, so which ones are more important to choose organic? Here is a list of fruit and vegetables below that are best to buy organic and ones that we can buy non-organic.

The worst culprits for pesticides (dirtiest!) in descending order:

The Environmental Working Group advises to buy organic for the following fruit and vegetables: strawberries, spinach, nectarines, apples, peaches, pears, cherries, grapes, celery, tomatoes, peppers and potatoes.

The cleanest fruit and vegetables where you can get away with choosing non-organic, in descending order: sweetcorn, avocado, pineapple, cabbage, onions, papaya, asparagus, mangoes, aubergine, honeydew melon, kiwis, cauliflower and grapefruit.

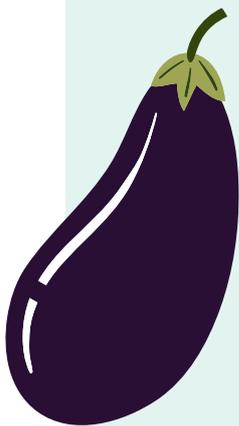
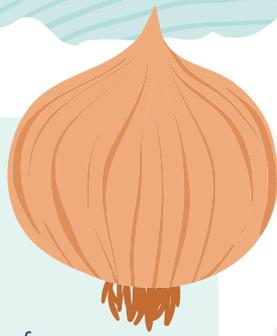
Organic milk is richer in omega 3 fats and cleaner, containing fewer hormones than non-organic milk with better welfare standards. The price difference is not too much, I would say 15p more, but check out your local supermarkets as I think it's worth having. If you have children, I would use full fat organic milk due to higher amounts of calcium for bones and teeth; semi-skimmed is better for adults.

Meat: Organic meat contains fewer antibiotics/hormones and animals are fed on a much healthier diet than non-organic. They also contain higher amounts of omega 3 fatty acids. There can be quite a hike in price for organic meat, but if you choose non-organic, it's good to buy leaner cuts of meat or cheaper cuts such as belly, shoulder and mince.

Eggs: Choose eggs where it states on the packaging 'happy, healthy chickens' or 'high in vitamin D'. Again, organic chickens have the best quality of life and are fed on a better diet than non-organic farmed chickens. There isn't a huge difference in price either.

Wine: You can buy organic wine and for people that have a low tolerance to sulphites, this could result in a less sore head in the morning! Most supermarkets sell organic wines – personally I love the organic Prosecco from Aldi at £7.99!

If you don't want to go down the organic route, you can buy a wash specially to use on fruit and vegetables to eliminate pesticides, called Veggie Wash. [Here's a link](#) to where you can get it from (on Amazon).



"For what it's worth... it's never too late to be whoever you want to be. There's no time limit. Start whenever you want. You can change or stay the same.

There are no rules to this thing. We can make the best or the worst of it. I hope you make the best of it. I hope you see things that startle you. I hope you feel things you never felt before. I hope you meet people who have a different point of view. I hope you live a life you're proud of, and if you're not, I hope you have the courage to start all over again."

F. Scott Fitzgerald

Quarantini

Lemon or Elderflower Collins

Ingredients

50ml gin

25ml lemon juice

25ml sugar syrup

125ml chilled soda water

or add elderflower and lemon. You can make it with elderflower cordial or liqueur (St Germain elderflower liqueur recommended) for something a touch boozier. Mix the drink as normal, but use the liqueur or cordial in place of the sugar syrup. Garnish with a lemon slice.

Or for something completely different and ever so indulgent; how about an alcoholic thick shake. If you're going for it, then go the whole hog: vanilla ice-cream, a splash of milk and chocolate Baileys all blended together with some black forest gateaux! Not for the faint hearted...or regular consumption!

Mask top tips from Chelle

Try adding a drop of peppermint essential oil (just the one!), to the inside of your mask before wearing it. Peppermint helps to relieve headaches which some have reported suffering when wearing masks repeatedly. It also has mild antimicrobial properties (not a substitute to washing frequently but every little helps), and the scent is cool and refreshing. It's a perfect mood enhancer, as well as helping to make breathing with something covering your mouth and nose that little easier.

Glasses wearers, [click here](#) for tips on how to stop them steaming up while wearing a mask. Also, you could sew a button onto the outside of your mask so your glasses can rest on it! No more fogging or constant adjustment.

