30-Day Sleep Challenge: Before you Begin

Do you Have a Sleep Problem?

Did you know that there are over 100 sleep disorders? And some, such as sleep apnea, are life-threatening. Now I’m not a medical doctor, so I can’t give you advice for your particular sleep problems. But I can give you some resources and suggestions. According to Matthew Walker, author of *Why We Sleep*, short of a clinical sleep assessment, your responses to two questions can indicate a sleep problem.

1. After waking up in the morning, could you fall back asleep at 10:00 or 11:00. If the answer is “yes,” you are likely not getting sufficient sleep quantity and/or quality.
2. Can you function optimally without caffeine before noon? If the answer is “no,” then you are most likely using caffeine because you aren’t getting enough sleep.

Did the caffeine question mess you up? Would you like to try another test? Here’s a simple questionnaire that’s from the National Institutes of Health, called the SATED questionnaire. If you have a low score, then you’re more likely to suffer from a sleep disorder.

### SATED Questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rarely/ Never (0)</th>
<th>Sometimes (1)</th>
<th>Usually/ Always (2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Satisfaction</strong></td>
<td>Are you satisfied with your sleep?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alertness</strong></td>
<td>Do you stay awake all day without dozing?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Timing</strong></td>
<td>Are you asleep (or trying to sleep) between 2:00 and 4:00 a.m.?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Efficiency</strong></td>
<td>Do you spend less than 30 minutes awake at night? (This includes the time it takes to fall asleep and awakenings from sleep.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duration</strong></td>
<td>Do you sleep between 6 and 8 hours per day?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total for all items: ________

0 = Poor Sleep Health  
Good Sleep Health = 10

Where Can I Find Professional Help?

Your primary care physician may be able to refer you to a sleep clinic and you may be asked to keep a sleep diary. A good source of information is the National Sleep Foundation website. They can even help you Find a Sleep Professional.

---

1 Source: [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3902880/#FS1](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3902880/#FS1)
30-Day Sleep Challenge: Before you Begin

Can’t I just Take Sleeping Pills to Help me Sleep?
Here’s the bad news, straight from the mouth of Matthew Walker, “Sleeping pills do not provide natural sleep, can damage health, and increase the risk of life-threatening diseases.” Not only are most prescription sleeping pills classified as physically addictive, but when people stop taking these medications, they frequently suffer from rebound insomnia—even worse sleep than before they started taking the pills. Sleeping pills are NOT the answer!

If Sleeping Pills Don’t Work, what Can I Do?
The most effective therapy is called Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia, or CBT-I. Individuals work with a sleep therapist for several weeks to develop good sleep habits and address anxieties that disrupt sleep. CBT-I builds on basic sleep hygiene principles and supplements those with methods that are specific to each patient, problem, and lifestyle. Here are 12 tips for a healthy sleep, brought to you by the National Institutes of Health.

1. Stick to a sleep schedule. Go to bed and wake up at the same time each day.
2. Try to exercise at least 30 minutes on most days but not later than 2 to 3 hours before bedtime.
3. Avoid caffeine and nicotine
4. Avoid alcoholic drinks before bed.
5. Avoid large meals and beverages late at night.
6. If possible, avoid medicines that delay or disrupt your sleep.
7. Don’t take naps after 3 p.m.
8. Relax before bed.
9. Take a hot bath before bed.
10. Keep your bedroom dark, cool (around 65° Fahrenheit/18.3° Celsius), and gadget-free.
11. Have the right sunlight exposure. Get an hour of exposure to morning sunlight and turn down lights before bedtime.
12. Don’t lie in bed awake. If you’re in bed for more than 20 minutes or start feeling anxious or worried, get up and do some relaxing activity until you feel sleepy.

Can You Give me Some More Tips?
Sure! Make your bedroom as inviting as possible. Get rid of the clutter. Make sure you have a comfortable mattress, pillow, and bedding. Add aromatherapy with an Essential Oil Diffuser – try the Sleep and Relaxation Essential Oil. There are a number of apps that may help, such as Calm, which has sleep stories available for purchase. And meditation may help you sleep as well (see this article). Use a sleep journal to write down your thoughts before you go to bed, freeing your brain to relax and dream.

Why Should I Avoid Alcohol and Caffeine?
I know you didn’t sign up for a course on the science of sleep, but there are a couple of things you should know about how sleep works. There are two factors that are critical to our sleep.

• The 24-hour circadian rhythm, which brings about the release of melatonin, “the hormone of darkness,” into our bloodstream at night. Melatonin tells us that it’s dark and time for sleep. Once sleep is under way, melatonin slowly decreases until sunlight, when the release of melatonin stops altogether.

---

2 Melatonin can be used as a sleep aid, though it may only have a placebo effect that helps you relax into sleep. Melatonin is not regulated by the FDA - concentrations range from 83% less than claimed on the label to 478% more.

www.thefivejourneys.com
30-Day Sleep Challenge: Before you Begin

- Sleep pressure, which is attributed to adenosine, a chemical that is building up in our brains. Adenosine continues to increase in concentration with every waking minute that elapses – the longer you’re awake, the more adenosine will accumulate. As the adenosine in your brain accumulates, it signals an increasing desire to sleep (sleep pressure).

So how does caffeine fit into the story? Caffeine is a psychoactive stimulant and works by winning the battle against adenosine. Caffeine blocks the receptors, tricking you into feeling alert and awake. And caffeine has a tremendous half-life of 5 to 7 hours - if you have a cup of coffee at 10:00 in the morning, about 50% of that caffeine will still be circulating throughout your brain tissue at 5:00 p.m. Sleep may not come easily as your brain battles against the opposing force of caffeine.

Alcohol will help you fall asleep, right? Alcohol is in the class of drugs called sedatives. While it may help you fall asleep initially, alcohol disrupts your sleep with brief awakenings, so your sleep will not be restorative. And alcohol suppresses REM (rapid eye movement) sleep, which is intimately connected to the experience we call dreaming. Alcohol disrupts both the quality and quantity of sleep.

What if I have Pain Issues that Disrupt my Sleep?

Chronic pain often leads to self-medication, with prescription pills, over-the-counter pills, street drugs, or alcohol. A restful sleep may feel impossible when pain overtakes your entire being. I know just how you feel, because I’ve been there myself. And I can’t say that I have the magic solution for you. But one of the resources that made a lasting impact on me was a book called Managing Pain Before it Manages You. Between the book and a chronic pain class, I was able to use some cognitive skills that helped ease some of my nights. But not all of them. So join us on this Challenge, and maybe you’ll discover a technique or two that might give you a few good nights of sleep.

How can the 30-Day Sleep Challenge Help?

The 30-Day Challenge is based on CBT-I theory and uses techniques described in End the Insomnia Struggle and elsewhere. The Challenge will introduce concepts and suggestions that might help you sleep better. Each evening I’ll deliver a sleeping tip and a bedtime story – rated G – that will appeal to your senses and take you on a journey into a state of relaxation. Each story uses visualization to reduce anxieties and worries, and offers cues that you can use should you wake up in the middle of the night and have difficulty falling back to sleep. We’ll be traveling around the globe on adventures that will leave you tired, relaxed, and happy as you get ready for a pleasant night of dreams. Let’s make sleep something you relish.

How do I Diminish the Effect of Blue LED Light if I’m using my Tablet or Mobile Device at Night?

The irony of sending you to your tablet or mobile device each evening is not lost on me. Research suggests a link between the use of devices that emit blue LED light and diminished sleep quality. The light may block the rising melatonin levels, teasing you into thinking it’s daytime. If this is a concern for you in general, you can purchase a blue-light filtering screen protector for your device (here’s one for an iPad) or use LED light filtering glasses. I promise to keep each evening’s story short and pleasant, so you won’t be on your device very long. And you can always read the story before turning in for bed.

Sweet Dreams Ahead!

www.thefivejourneys.com