

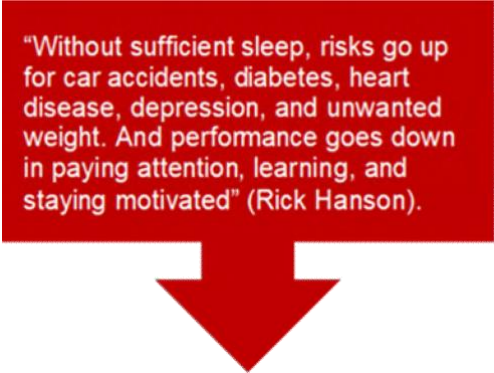
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## SLEEP

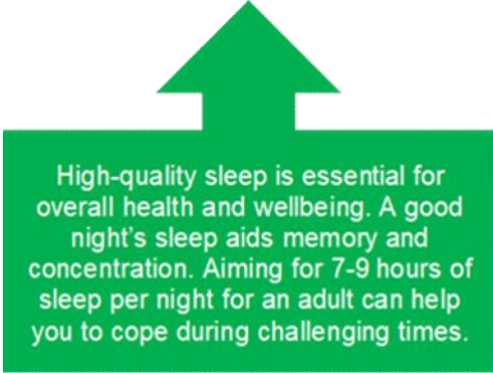
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### Managing sleep in challenging times

Most of us know that we should get more sleep. The truth is that almost all of us need more than we get. In fact, the more stressed you are or the harder you work the more sleep you need. And this goes double if you are ill!



"Without sufficient sleep, risks go up for car accidents, diabetes, heart disease, depression, and unwanted weight. And performance goes down in paying attention, learning, and staying motivated" (Rick Hanson).



High-quality sleep is essential for overall health and wellbeing. A good night's sleep aids memory and concentration. Aiming for 7-9 hours of sleep per night for an adult can help you to cope during challenging times.

Even being aware of the benefits of a good night's sleep, you may still be struggling to get enough sleep. Morning till night we bathe our eyes in artificial light – from our smartphones, computer screens, tablets and TVs. This blue light fools the brain into thinking it is still daytime. Thus, even though our minds may be tired, but our bodies remain wide-awake (or vice versa). When the regular rhythm of each day is disrupted, sleep difficulties can arise. We struggle to fall asleep, wake earlier and more frequently through the night. We may also experience insomnia.

### Common Myths About Sleep

#### Sleep myth 1: You can get by on little sleep

You *can* do this occasionally – if unavoidable, but if you cheat on the amount of sleep, it will harm your physical and mental health. Poor sleep reduces concentration and overall performance. Irritability, anxiety and depression can increase, as can overeating.

## Sleep myth 2: If you wake up in the night, it's best to stay in bed and count sheep

Staying in bed when you cannot sleep is a good idea for a few minutes, but if after 10-20 minutes you are still awake, get out of bed, find a quiet space to meditate, listen to some soothing music or do something else that relaxes you (but no screen time!). Once you feel tired again, you can try going to bed. As counting sheep starts with having to imagine them, it actually shifts your mind into an active phase, making sleep less likely! So leave the sheep to get their own rest and instead, focus your attention on your breathing and counting your breaths (see exercise 2 under the Practice section below).

## Sleep myth 3: Napping stops you from sleeping at night

When your smartphone battery is critically low, even a ten-minute charge can be a lifesaver. Sure, you will still do the nightly charge, but that quick power boost can be enough to make a vital call. Napping is the same: a 10 to 30-minute nap during the day won't replace a good night's sleep but can give the mind and body time a much-needed 'second wind' when you're flagging.

## Myth 4: During sleep, your brain rests

Unlike the body, the brain doesn't get time off. 24/7 from when we're born until we die, the brain controls our organs and vital bodily functions. That said, sleep is the brain's time to restore and repair, preparing you to be alert and fully functional for the day ahead.

## 3 steps to Get More Sleep



**Decide how much time you want to sleep each night.** Then, look at your schedule, see when you need to wake up, and work backwards to give yourself a bedtime. What do you need to do in the hour before bedtime to get to sleep on time?



**Observe the "reasons" that emerge to stay up past your bedtime.** Most, if not all of them, will boil down to a basic choice: what's more important, your health and well-being or watching another hour of TV, doing housework or ... (fill in the blank).



**Instead of aiming for eight hours of uninterrupted sleep, you may be better off aiming for five [90-minute cycles](#).** If you are finding that your sleep is becoming disrupted during difficult times, you may find it helpful to set smaller, more achievable goals to help you manage your sleep.

## Tips for Sleeping Well During Difficult Times

Good 'sleep hygiene' is about creating a pause between our daytime routines and sleep routines. This pause prepares mind and body for bed.

- ❑ **Stop eating** (particularly chocolate and fatty foods) **two to three hours before bedtime**. A busy digestive system won't help you sleep.
- ❑ **Avoid alcohol and caffeine two or three hours before bedtime**. These substances are stimulants and disrupt sleep patterns and cycles. Instead, try a relaxing herbal drink such as chamomile.
- ❑ **Turn off your technology two to three hours before bedtime**. The blue light emitted by technology fools the brain into thinking it is still daytime.
- ❑ **Set a bedtime routine**, to include time and space for relaxing and switching off (e.g. have a bath, do some light yoga, gentle stretches or meditation).
- ❑ **Avoid strenuous exercise two or three hours before bedtime**. Regular exercise can support better sleep; however, late evening high-intensity exercise will wake you up, not wind you down.
- ❑ **Disengage with the news and social media**. News stories and status updates can increase anxiety.
- ❑ **Make your bedroom a space for sleeping**. Take out the technology, keep the temperature a little cool, put up blackout curtains or blinds, and declutter the room, making it a place of calm and serenity.
- ❑ **Try soothing essential oils**, in a pre-sleep bath or as a drop of oil near your pillow. Lavender is thought to aid sleep.

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## PRACTICE

### Practice 1: Reflect – what keeps you up past a good bedtime?

- ❑ Are you working too much?
- ❑ Hooked on getting entertainment?
- ❑ Habitually drown in to social media?
- ❑ Vulnerable to worry?

Write down your responses, you can add more distractors that drag you away from a good sleep. Next, for each of your distractors or bed habits, write down what one small thing that you could start doing as of now to improve the quality and/or quantity of your sleep and start implementing them.

### Practice 2: Simple breathing meditation to help you fall asleep

- ❑ Lying in your bed, find a comfortable position and gently bring your attention to your breathing. Don't try to change how you are breathing; just spend a moment noticing each in-breath and each out-breath.
- ❑ When you are ready, take a deep breath in, hold your breath for a second, and then slowly breathe out (this is breath one).
- ❑ Repeat this for up to ten breaths – breathing in, holding the breath, and then slowly breathing out.

- ❑ Keep counting the breaths, from one to ten and then back to one again, until you fall asleep.

### Practice 3: The CALM Reminder – A Quick, Calming Body Scan to Check in With Yourself

This mini body scan or relaxation practice helps when we are feeling flooded with strong emotions, anxiety, anger, or anything else that sets off our limbic alarm system.

Ideally, practice both during a day, as well as before sleep. “The CALM Reminder” helps us check into and then relax four big zones of our body (C-Chest, A-Arms, L-Legs, M-Mouth).

Start by finding a comfortable position. Allow your eyes to close if you feel comfortable. Begin with a few expanded breaths, allowing your body to relax as you extend the out- breath.

#### C-Chest

Bring your awareness to your chest and torso area. First, scan your chest, opening and lifting it. Bring your awareness to any sensations there. Then tense all the muscles throughout your chest and torso, hold for a count of three, then allow your muscles to relax and feel the tension flow away and relaxation flow in with the next few breaths

#### A-Arms

Shift your awareness now into your arms, from your shoulders down to your fingers. Scan your awareness upward from your hands through the forearms and upper arms. Squeeze your fists, tense your arms all the way up to your shoulders and hold for three breaths, feeling the tension, and then just release the physical and emotional tension, and let your arms relax completely. Take three more breaths, enjoying the relaxation you feel in your arms.

#### L-Legs

Direct your attention down to your legs, from your hips to your toes. Gently begin to squeeze the muscles in your feet, up through your legs and around your waist, holding that tension for three breaths, noting the sensations, and then release. Take three more breaths as you feel the tension flowing out of your legs.

#### M-Mouth

Shift your awareness to your mouth and jaw. Notice any other sensations in your mouth and even the rest of your head and neck. Now clench your mouth and other muscles around it, holding for three breaths and release. As you let go of the tension, allow your mouth to relax into a small smile to yourself and to the world around you. Take a few more moments to enjoy the sensations of relaxation and smiling.

For the source of this practice and more information about it, click [here](#).

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Try to find some time this week and maybe throughout any holidays coming up to get more sleep – and see the difference, observe how your performance, efficiency and emotional state change. Perhaps try journaling, noting down your daily observations.

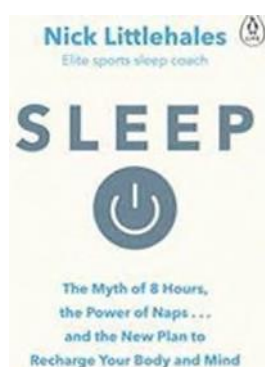
### Sources:

1. *“Mindfulness for Challenging Times: A Collection of Voices for Peace, Self-care”* by Shamash Alidina and Teach Mindfulness Community, 2020.
2. *“Just one thing”* by Rick Hanson, 2011.
3. *“The Path to Lawyer Well-being: Practical Recommendations for Positive Change”* – the [report](#) of the National Task Force on lawyer well-being, 2017.

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## RECOMMENDED READING & APPs

### Book: “Sleep” by Nick Littlehales



Nick Littlehales – the elite sleep coach to some of the world's leading sports stars and teams – has authored this amazing book covering some groundbreaking practical techniques that have transformed the way athletes approach sleep, unlocking higher levels of mental and physical recovery, personal best performances and ultimately a winning mindset. Now he lays bare his strategies for us all to use. From your personal sleep characteristics and cycles, to posture and bedding, he sets out achievable ways to get the highest possible quality of sleep recovery.

### App: “Sleep” by Nick Littlehales



The Peak Sleep app is designed to give you a better night's sleep by creating a personalized bedtime routine using science-backed techniques such as mindfulness meditation, progressive muscle relaxation, kid's calm guides, breathing exercise, bedtime stories, relaxation music and others. It may help you to keep a record of the number of cycles you go through during each night's sleep to help you set realistic sleep targets.

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*Any questions, please contact [info@mindfulworkplace.community](mailto:info@mindfulworkplace.community).*