

tips for better sleep

This is a **little better** zine.

It doesn't have the solutions to your big problems, but the skills inside can make coping a **little** easier when life is difficult.

Learn more at **littlebetterzine.com**

Getting enough quality sleep is important to me because:

► The Importance of Sleep

Sleep is considered a **pillar of health** – like nutrition and physical activity, we need good quality sleep or else our health will suffer.

Sleep has many health benefits:

- maintains physical and mental health
- stabilizes mood
- lowers blood pressure
- restores immune system
- improves memory and concentration
- decreases stress and prevents stress-related illness

Most adults need **at least 7 hours** of uninterrupted sleep each night, and most teens need 8 or more hours of sleep per night.

► Your Sleep Environment

Your bedroom should be **dark, quiet, and cool** (but not cold).

Remove or turn off electronics that create light and noise. Wear a sleep mask or use blackout curtains to keep your bedroom as dark as possible. If you can't make your bedroom silent, use a white noise or sound machine to softly block out background noises.

Make your bed and your bedroom as comfy as possible – a tidy, personalized, soothing environment will invite better sleep.

Sleep in loose, comfortable clothes.

Make your bed a **“sleep only” space** – try not to bring work, entertainment, or other wakeful activities into your bed if possible (sex and intimacy are the exception).

Record each day you did your bedtime routine for two weeks:

Week 1 ○○○○○○○○

Week 2 ○○○○○○○○

► Establishing a Bedtime Routine

Bedtime routines help your mind and body learn when to relax and prepare for sleep each night.

Go to sleep and wake up at the **same time every day**, even on weekends. Set an alarm for starting your bedtime routine in the evening just as you set an alarm for waking up in the morning.

Make a **30-60 minute** bedtime routine that is restful and easy for you to do every day. Your bedtime routine might include some of the following relaxing activities:

- personal care (brush teeth, wash face, etc.)
- change into comfortable sleeping clothes
- put away smartphone and other electronic devices
- dim lights
- read a book
- listen to calming music
- drink warm milk or herbal tea (caffeine free only)
- mindful breathing or meditation
- muscle relaxation
- light stretching
- prayer

A sleep medicine expert at Harvard Medical School once said “sleep is the enemy of capitalism,” because we aren’t productive while we sleep.

How do demands for **productivity** make it harder for me to get healthy sleep? What other demands make it harder for me to get healthy sleep?

► Barriers to Sleep

Some activities and behaviors can interfere with good quality sleep. Try to avoid or minimize the following barriers which can make falling asleep or staying asleep more difficult:

- avoid caffeine and nicotine
- avoid alcohol in the evening
- avoid exercise in the evening
- avoid large, heavy meals before bedtime
- avoid hot baths and hot showers before bedtime
- avoid naps – and if you need to nap, keep naps brief (less than 30 minutes) and limit napping to early in the day
- avoid smartphones screens and other electronic devices for at least 30 minutes before bedtime
- avoid activities before bedtime that may be exciting, upsetting, or unpredictable – like viewing social media
- avoid checking the time repeatedly while falling asleep, and consider moving clocks out of view

Some medications can also interfere with sleep – talk to a pharmacist or prescriber about possible sleep-related side effects of any medications you take.

► When You Can't Sleep

If you are unable to fall asleep after 30 minutes, try to determine why you can't sleep.

If you are not tired enough to sleep, get out of bed and try a calm activity – but avoid the sleep barriers listed above. After 30-60 minutes, or when you feel tired, try going back to bed.

If you are too upset or distracted to sleep, explore skills for relaxation and emotion regulation – more at littlebetterzine.com

Talk to a doctor if you notice signs of **sleep apnea**: loud snoring or gasping, frequent waking during the night, feeling tired all day even after getting a full night of sleep