



Mind Affinity
Empower yourself

Duncan Price
07840 829 758

400 Pavilion Drive
Northampton
NN4 7PA

Sleep Well

A Mind Affinity guide to
enjoying better sleep

By Duncan Price





Introduction

Mind Affinity are here to work with you to empower you to achieve the changes you wish to make in life. Poor quality or quantity of sleep can have a huge impact on many other aspects of your life. With the right sleep you will have more energy and resilience to apply to whatever tasks and challenges you may encounter during the day. Poor sleep can be a contributing factor to a number of conditions including Stress and Anxiety. Poor sleep can also be a symptom of these issues, and others.

This guide is to provide you with some simple advice on improving sleep quality. Some of this advice may not be suited to your current situation, That's ok, just use what works well for you, discard the rest and contact us if you need more help.

Alcohol, Caffeine and Other Drugs

When struggling to achieve quality sleep many people will try and medicate their way to a good night's rest. This can be counter-productive.

Alcohol - can help you get to sleep (as I'm sure all drinkers will have experienced at some point) BUT, your sleep will likely be more restless and of a lower quality. Avoid regular or excessive amounts of alcohol if you want to improve sleep quality.

Caffeine - Everyone knows that caffeine is a stimulant which, as such, will impair sleep. Avoid drinking caffeine in the afternoon and evening to improve your quality of sleep and make it easier to fall asleep.

Cannabis - Many people find Cannabis helps them to sleep - this is a result of some of the cannabinoids, great! Right? The problem here is that it can hang around, leaving you feeling less productive the following day which in turn results in lower daily activity and therefore worse sleep (see exercise section). Cannabis use for sleep can also build up a reliance and increased tolerance. If you feel you 'need' cannabis to sleep hypnosis can help you.

Sleeping tablets - There are a range of sleeping tablets available. This includes 'natural' remedies and prescriptions. I prefer to help people sleep without the need for drugs of any kind, however, if you have been prescribed by a G.P. be sure to check the details on how and when to take them. If you are still struggling, we can help you, just give us a call.

Bedtime is Sleep Time

Ideally your bed should be used only for sleeping in. If you only use your bed for that purpose then your mind will recognise that being in bed means it's time to sleep. Watching T.V. Using your smartphone, even reading books all detract from sleep and encourage your mind to see bedtime as active time rather than time for sleep. Go to bed when you are ready for sleep and get out of bed in the morning (and stay out of bed) and you will train your mind that bedtime is sleep time.

Exercise

Quality of sleep and ability to fall asleep can both be improved by increasing daily activity levels. Gentle exercise in the morning will tell your mind and body that it is time to be awake, this will increase your energy levels for the day ahead. By being more active during the day your mind and body will be more ready for sleep at night. This is because you know that you need to replenish your energy levels and because it gives your mind a greater distinction between day time (active) and night time (sleep).

Look on the Bright Side

Getting plenty of sun during the day can also help you sleep at night. This is down to the relation between light and melatonin (see 'Lighting' for more information).





Sleep Well

A Mind Affinity guide to enjoying better sleep.

Physical Environment

Setting the right environment for good sleep is important. You wouldn't expect to sleep well on the floor of a busy shopping centre. If you would then maybe you don't need to be reading this guide. So here are the simple environmental considerations:

Lighting

Melatonin is a vital hormone which helps regulate your sleep and body rhythms. Its release is controlled by the pineal gland which responds directly to light. When it is dark, more melatonin is produced which tells your body it is time to sleep.

So invest in some thick, black-out curtains and make sure you are sleeping with the lights out (consider small LEDs from devices on standby also).

Sound

Most people will sleep better if there is no noise to disturb them, some people find it easier to get to sleep with some background noise. The key here is to minimise any sudden changes in sound. If you do find it easier to get to sleep with some sound, ideally use a device or app that will fade that sound out slowly so that you can achieve a deeper sleep with less background noise. If music does help aim for something between 60 to 80 bps for good sleep.

Temperature

Keep your bedroom at a comfortable temperature for good sleep (15-20°C). If your struggle is getting to sleep then try a hot bath before bed. As your body slowly cools this will make you feel more sleepy. It will also help to relax your muscles and ease tension.

Taste

Minty freshness from your toothpaste is a great feeling but mint can be quite overpowering and can make you feel more awake. Brush your teeth a little earlier to avoid the strong taste keeping you awake.

Smell

Scent can make a big difference for some people. Avoid strong scents in the bedroom before sleep. Lavender can help you sleep so try a tiny dash on your pillow - if you like the smell.

Routine

Humans are naturally creatures of habit. Bad news for smokers (though, we can help you with that), but great news for people making lasting positive changes. Once you repeat something enough times it becomes habit and you start doing it naturally, with ease. Sleeping is the same. To tap into this habit-forming nature; routine and structure are hugely beneficial. Set yourself a regular bed time and wake up time. Even if you don't get to sleep easily to start with, stick with the same time. Apply the same rules for weekends (or other days off). Remember to get up at the same time too and not stay in bed late. Your mind and body will get used to this routine and will start to learn that this is time for sleep. - Just remember that the habit of playing on your phone for hours in bed before sleeping is just as easy for the mind to learn.

Before Bed

For a really good sleep it helps to plan ahead. Your level of activity for the hour before sleep can make a big difference, especially the last 20 minutes. Use this as time to wind down, avoid technology and screens. For bonus points spend some of this time thinking of the best bits of your day or things that you are thankful for. It's always nice to end the day on a good note. Maybe do this in the bath?

Screens

When you watch T.V, look at your phone or play computer games you may not feel very active but your brain may disagree. Firstly, your mind may not differentiate so well between T.V. and reality. Your mind will be very active, taking in all the information and constantly changing images and this will wake your mind up (even if your eyes feel more tired). The constantly changing pixels even when just half browsing Facebook on your phone is enough to confuse your mind into working harder to stay alert, thus making sleep less easy. Turn off the T.V. and put your phone down (away from the bed so you're not tempted). Leaving your phone away from the bed will also stop you from reaching to check it in the night if you do wake up.



Time for Bed

I hope the information above was useful. Making some simple changes to your sleeping routines can really help improve the quality and quantity of your sleep. The most common question I get from people once they have taken the above in is: "Once I've done all this, how do I actually get to sleep?"

You may be surprised at just how easy sleeping can be when following the above, without needing any further guidance. However, everyone is different so there is no simple answer that works for everyone. Make the changes listed above, be patient with yourself while you adjust to your new routine and if you feel you need more support choose any combination of the following that works for you - maybe try out a few different ideas to see what works best.

Hide Your Clock

Stop yourself from obsessing about the time by hiding it. Clock watching is hugely disruptive to quality sleep.

Blow Bubbles

Here's the curveball. Sounds silly, right? Bubbles are relaxing and hypnotic to watch. Blowing bubbles means taking nice deep breaths. Focusing on bubbles keeps you from focusing on other things which may keep you up.

Visualisation

Imagine yourself in a relaxing place (real or imaginary). Take time to focus on all your senses - what can you see, hear, taste in the air, smell, feel? Just focus on enjoying that time to relax, it's nice to have the time to relax properly.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Tensing each muscle in turn working up from the toes. Tense for 5 sec then relax for 30 before moving to the next muscle group. This technique is supported by the national sleep foundation. I find that it works best when used along side other methods suggested here.

By tensing your muscles you are better able to appreciate how relaxed they can feel when they are not tensed.

Counting Sheep

Does this really work? - maybe not. But the principle is sound. The idea here is to give you something to focus on that doesn't take a lot of attention. Clearing your mind can take a lot of practice, this method distracts you from other thoughts and helps calm your mind.

My suggestion:

Count slowly, and calmly. Focus on breathing slowly and in a relaxed way, count a number on every other out breath and notice the change on every count as you relax more.

Oh, and forget the sheep.





Waking up in the night

If you find yourself waking up in the night: firstly, try going back to sleep, follow some of the techniques listed above, they may help. If it's a regular problem re-visit the previous advice and see if you could be better at preparing for sleep. If you can't get back to sleep after around 15 minutes then get up. Remember that we want the mind to associate the bed with sleep, staying in bed when we can't get back to sleep may break that association. Go to a different room and do something relaxing - if possible do this under candle light. Just sitting and enjoying the movement of the flame can be relaxing in itself. Do not watch T.V, look at your phone or turn the main lights on - these all give out a large amount of the blue frequency of light which will impair your production of melatonin and therefore disrupt your rhythm.

Once you start to feel relaxed again, head back to bed and re-visit the suggestions on the previous page, if needed, to get back to sleep. If you are struggling to feel relaxed at this point here are some further tips you may like to try:

A Splash of Cold Water

Submerge your face in cold water for 30 seconds. If you are feeling anxious this will help you to calm down. The cold water will trigger an involuntary response called the 'Mammalian dive reflex' lowering your heart rate and blood pressure

Colouring in

When you get up, spend 10 minutes colouring in. It will engage your hands and mind ensuring that you have a proper break from trying to sleep but is still a relaxing process which will help you unwind ready to return to bed for sleep.

Look at people yawning

O.K. So I said you shouldn't look at a screen, this one may need some preparation to avoid doing so. Print off a selection of pictures of people (or cute animals if you prefer) yawning and looking sleepy, this will encourage you to yawn and feel sleepy too.

Stay Awake

Ah, the classic reverse psychology. This is a great application of it too. Some studies have shown that people find it harder to stay awake when focusing on trying to do so. It's a great way to quash anxiety around sleeping.





Good night

I really hope you find this guide useful. Remember: everyone is different and what works well for one may not work so well for others. The advice contained here is based on facts which have been researched and proven to work but there may be barriers in your way stopping you from getting a good night's sleep. If you try the steps above and find that you need further support please contact us on the details below or visit our website to see how we can help you further.

www.MindAffinity.co.uk

duncan@MindAffinity.co.uk

07840 829 758

We are always keen to hear your feedback. Contact us with your sleep stories, let us know how this guide helped you and any other suggestions you may have.

If you're feeling especially helpful then maybe take the time to share your feedback via our Facebook Page:

facebook.com/mindaffinity

Thank you and sleep well

