



Your guide to better
SLEEP & DEEP REST

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*Even a soul submerged in sleep
is hard at work and helps make
something of the world.*

HERACLITUS

Our culture embraces and rewards constant busyness and exhaustion. Yet sleep is neither passive, nor less important or productive than being awake. Sleep teaches us to let go, to surrender, to check in, not to check out.

How you approach something influences how it approaches you back. So, stay curious and compassionate as you explore more ways to not only sleep better but also allow for rest during your busiest days.

Let us use the seasons as an analogy for our 24-hour day – ultimately the way you start and approach your day will impact how you will end your day and engage with deep and rewarding rest.



Spring

Spring

(WAKING, UNTIL WHEN YOU CHOOSE TO START 'WORK' OR ENGAGING WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD)

- Lengthen the time between waking and engaging with the outside world as much as possible. This will help minimise the amount of time that you feel hyper aroused.
- Consider keeping a dream journal or writing a gratitude journal on waking.
- Get enough exposure to natural light. This is especially important if you do not spend much time outdoors. Exposure to sunlight during the morning and to darkness at night helps your internal body clock to regulate itself.
- Exercise so that you release cortisol and produce feel good hormones.
- Spend some time in quiet reflection or contemplation, even just 5 minutes is a great start. This will help you to 'tune' yourself for the rest of the day.



Summer

(PRODUCTIVE DAY)

Summer

- Take a mindful break at least once in the morning and once in the afternoon. Check in with yourself asking “How am I in this moment? How would I like to be?”
- Remember that energy renewal and performance work best in oscillation not linear forms. Allow yourself brief moments of rest during your day.
- The permission to rest, even just for a mindful minute is more important than the mechanism or what you do.
- Try this breathing check in: Place a hand on your belly and take deep belly inhales. As you exhale, allow yourself to ‘let go’ of tension around your back, shoulders, neck, jaw, or face.
- Practicing ‘letting go’ not only releases physical (and emotional) tension but may also help for the grand letting go needed to surrender to sleep!
- Do 10 minutes of mindfulness or deep relaxation as part of your midday break.
- Reduce or avoid caffeine after 12 pm.
- Balance your blood glucose by eating meals and snacks that provide enough fibre and protein.



Autumn

Autumn

(THE FEW HOURS BEFORE GOING TO SLEEP)

It is important to wind down, to apply the brakes so to speak, before coming to a standstill i.e. sleep. Establish a relaxing bedtime routine. This tells your body it is time to sleep – and you need a routine just as much as children do. Take a warm shower or bath, read a book, meditate, or do some light stretches. Allow yourself a slow, gradual journey towards rest.

Spend time doing creative things rather than taking in more stimulus such as working, social media or TV. We need darkness and night itself; we need rest. We need the gradual winding down at the end of one day to prepare for the next. This requires courage, as our culture pushes away darkness and night.



Use your senses as a guide:

SIGHT

- Soften the lights in your home. Use side lamps or spend a night around candlelight once in a while.
- Use black out curtains or blinds if necessary, to minimise sunlight.
- No electronic devices at least one hour before bedtime. The light from computer, tablet, phone, and television screens mimic daylight, waking you up, but there is also scope for overstimulation from the content you engage with.
- Social media is NOT down time.
- Read something non work-related: novels, poetry philosophy, geography, a new hobby etc.



HEARING

- Try soothing music or hypno-meditations. Spotify and YouTube have many long soothing music options.
- Find podcasts or audio books with voices that are soothing. I use Eckhardt Tolle, Richard Rohr and David Whyte.
- Use earplugs especially if you wake up because of birds or barking dogs (silicone ones will not hurt the ear canal).



SMELL

- Try deep breathing using lavender oil or vanilla – any soothing aroma.
- Nostril breathing techniques can be very relaxing.

TASTE

- Have a warm drink such as chai or chamomile or rooibos.
- Avoid alcohol as even one drink may negatively impact your sleep.



TOUCH

- Think of the material and fabrics against your skin. Pajamas, nightdresses, and even special T-shirts send a sleep-friendly message to your body. If you wore it to the gym, do not wear it to bed.
- Invest in the best linen possible.
- Ensure you have the right cushions, pillows, and mattress to support your body.
- Have a warm bath and massage yourself with a lavender scented oil before going to sleep.



Winter (SLEEP ITSELF)

Consider your sleepscape. What would you change if sleep were a loved one or a lover? Would you change the colours? Temperature? Things? Linen? Do you climb into bed and experience a sense of nurturing and comfort? Surround yourself with things that are comforting and soothing so you can drift off gently.

- Before bed, write a list of what you are grateful for.
- Keep your bedroom dark, quiet, and cool.
- Do not charge your phone next to your bed. Even better: gently escort all devices completely out of your bedroom.
- If you wake up in the middle of the night, DO NOT look at the time as this will likely make you anxious.
- Use visualisations such as lying on the shoreline or under trees or in a hammock.

Making these small changes can have a big impact on your sleep and mean the difference between walking around in a daze all day – and being fully awake, alert, and productive. If you try them consistently for a month or so, and your sleep does not improve, then it may be time to seek professional help.

Winter



POEM

Just up

When we awaken there is a moment
before we remember
the burdens we bear,
that yesterday we lost or won
a fortune or a battle or a love
or that today we must go
to work or to court or to hospital
or we have nowhere to go,
before we start piecing together
who we have been or who we will be,
and in that moment, we are simply
consciousness, sensation,
appetite not yet linked to
memory or will.

I like the way we are
in that naked moment
before we are defined,
in that briefest moment
before we don ourselves.

By Steven Barza

References and resources:

Positive Sleep by Giles Watkins

www.sleepfoundation.org

Mindfulness app and resources for sleep such as music and courses: <https://insighttimer.com>

TED talk by Matt Walker - Sleep is your superpower!

https://www.ted.com/talks/matt_walker_sleep_is_your_superpower?language=en