

Take Note

To fix your sleep issues, you have to figure out what's causing them. That's why experts recommend keeping a sleep log. Every morning, jot down how you feel and how you slept. After three weeks, a pattern will emerge.



The Stressed-Out Person's *Guide to Sleep*

In case you hadn't noticed, we're exhausted. Fifty-seven percent of women have trouble falling asleep, and even more wake up feeling blech, according to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America. And another survey found 42 percent of us are home—in our own beds, lights off, eye cream on—just too full of anxiety to sleep. “When someone is stressed, the first thing that gets impacted is sleep,” says Robert Rosenberg, the medical director of the Sleep Disorders Center of Prescott Valley in Arizona. “Stress can trigger inflammation, muscle aches, memory issues, and fatigue, while skimping on sleep can lead to obesity, heart disease, diabetes, and stress. It's all cyclical.” Losing 30 minutes of sleep every night can even mess with your metabolism.

But we're not all doomed to a life of anxiety, insomnia, and elastic waistbands. With a few adjustments—and yes, one involves turning off your iPhone*—you can decrease stress, increase sleep, and slide into a leather midi skirt with reckless abandon. **By Chloe Metzger**

It's 3:17 A.M. Again.

Now here's what you're going to do about it.

Whatever you do, don't stress out! OK, if you do, remind yourself that everyone cycles through periods of deep and light sleep throughout the night, as often as every 90 minutes. "Instead of worrying, congratulate yourself for sleeping so normally, and let yourself drift off again," says Joyce Walsleben, an adjunct associate professor of medicine at NYU School of Medicine. And don't look at the clock.

If that doesn't work, get out of bed and walk into another room.

"Tossing and turning makes your brain associate your bedroom with stress, making it harder to fall asleep each night," says Daniel A. Barone, an assistant professor of neurology at the Weill Cornell Medical College Center for Sleep Medicine in New York City. Go into the living room, sit on the couch, close your eyes, and focus on breathing. And don't freak out if you feel stressed. One way to do that: "Don't block out anxious thoughts; allow them to pass, and just stay connected to the feeling of each breath until you're sleepy again," he says.

Don't count sheep—it's an old wives' tale that can actually keep you awake a bit longer, according to a study from Oxford University. Instead, picture yourself floating in the water by a tropical island. Study participants fell asleep 20 minutes faster when they imagined relaxing scenes than they normally did.

Playing Catch-up

Sleeping late on Sunday morning might be affecting your thighs. Study participants who regularly stayed up or slept at least two hours later on weekends weighed more than those who slept the same amount but maintained a consistent schedule. Alternating sleep patterns may impair the body's ability to metabolize fats and sugars, says Michael Parsons, a scientist at MRC Harwell, a genetic-research firm in England. He advises stabilizing the body's clock by sticking to a regular eating schedule, too.

Bedroom Basics

Not to mince words, but there's a decent chance you're doing absolutely everything wrong.

You keep the room warm and cozy. Which is perfect—if you want a miserable night's sleep. A low core-body temperature induces sleep. That means you should set the thermostat between 60 and 68 degrees at night, says Holly Phillips, the author of *The Exhaustion Breakthrough* (Rodale). In other words, *brr* equals *zzz*.

You crack the window. Actually, that may be fine and good, but unless you can crack the window without also cracking the curtains, you're in trouble. "Your brain can detect light through your eyelids, and even small amounts can signal to your brain that it's time to wake up," says Rosenberg. To keep the room properly dark, install blackout curtains, keep your laptop in another room, move the night-light to the hallway, and toss a scarf over any small, blinking lights.

You snuggle up with your baby beagle. Cats, dogs, hamsters (hey, to each her own) mess up your sleep more than you'd think, experts say, since they move around at night. Let Mr. Grumbles sleep in the kitchen—you'll notice how much more rested you feel after a few days.

Best Sleep Apps

There are almost 5,000 apps to help you sleep—but you really only need one. We suggest you pick from our three favorites.

Sleep Time

Place your phone on the bed and this app monitors your movements and wakes you up in the morning during your lightest sleep phase, which means less fatigue for you in the A.M. **Free; iOS and Android.**

Misfit Beddit

Affix the superthin sensor strip to your mattress, install the app, and go to sleep. The belt will track your movements, heart rate, and respiration each night, as well as the time it takes for you to fall asleep. After learning your sleep patterns, you'll be able to see whether that 3 P.M. latte messed with your sleep. **\$149.99 for the monitor strip; iOS.**

SleepRate

The app collects data from a heart-rate sensor (you get used to it pretty quickly), tracks your sleep and ambient noises, and uses an algorithm developed at the Stanford Center for Sleep Sciences and Medicine to analyze the data. You'll get a sleep score each morning and a personalized assessment and recommendations. **\$99.99 for the app, sensor, and assessment; iOS and Android.**

Tie One—and Only One—On

A couple of glasses of wine might help you fall asleep, but as the alcohol wears off (after four or five hours), it hinders REM sleep, the cycle that helps you process memories, emotions, and logic. So you feel fried, if not hungover, the next day. You have three options here:

1. Have two drinks at dinner, but "stop drinking two to four hours before bed," says Joseph Ojile, the medical director and CEO of Clayton Sleep Institute in St. Louis.
2. Don't drink at dinner, but instead sip just one glass of wine up to an hour before bed, says Ojile. Basically, you shouldn't "have more than one drink in the two-hour window before going to sleep."
3. Find joy and fulfillment in chamomile tea.

90 The number of minutes a deep-sleep cycle could last

5 Things to Do Tonight (And Every Night)

Cut out this list and tape it to your forehead. Or at least put it next to your bed.

Meditate—without rolling your eyes. “The parts of the brain that light up when you meditate are the same parts that are associated with happiness, which means that part of the brain can help you relax and ease into sleep, too,” says Ojile. The goal is to distract yourself from anxious thoughts—easier said than done. (If you think you’ll need help, download Headspace, a free phone app created by a former Buddhist monk that offers easy-to-follow guided meditations.)

Power down two hours before bed. You already know that the blue light from your gadgets stops the production of melatonin in your brain (and is the worst thing for sleep short of an espresso), but recent research found that people who checked their phones for business purposes after 9 P.M. had more disrupted sleep and were in fact less productive the next day. If you really can’t wind down without technology (pathetic!), experts say TV is less terrible, as long as it’s not in your bedroom and you’re watching something boring. (Good news for C-Span!) Better yet, download an audiobook, switch your phone

to airplane mode, and listen with headphones until you doze off.

Do something that mellow you out, even if that means baking cupcakes while wearing a face mask. According to experts, any low-energy activity that makes you happy is more likely to help you sleep than lying in a dark room trying not to check your phone.

Get rid of bad juju. Mist a lavender spray, like Caldrea Lavender Pine Linen and Room Spray, on your sheets. Research and common sense have shown that lavender eases anxiety and makes us think of day spas in the south of France.

Make a to-do and to-don’t list. Write down every worry that might prevent you from falling asleep, like sending out thank-you notes, says Phillips. (If writing’s not your thing, dictate into your smartphone instead, but dim the screen’s backlight.) In the morning, revisit each point and ask yourself, Will it affect anyone if I don’t do this task? “If the answer is no, move the task to your to-don’t list and forgive yourself for being human,” says Phillips.

The Sex Approach

“Evidence indicates that an orgasm is a spinal reflex that sends input to the brain,” says Jim Pfaus, a professor of psychology and neuroscience at Concordia University in Montreal. “The brain then causes the release of hormones, like serotonin.” As far as sleep is concerned, sex is good, but good sex is great.

About Last Night

If you believe you slept poorly, you’ll feel tired all day, according to researchers at Colorado College in Colorado Springs. But the study also found that when participants were told they had above-average REM sleep—even though they didn’t—they performed better on cognitive tests and felt more awake than the below-average group.

So just like when you tell yourself the dressing room doesn’t have skinny mirrors or liquid calories don’t count, the only way out of the cycle is to lie to yourself. Take the placebo, and chase it with a shot of espresso (as long as it’s before 2 P.M.). Repeat after us: “I slept great!”

