

Sleep

Sleep can have a huge impact upon our well-being. Our bodies need enough sleep in order for us to be able to function effectively physically and mentally. Not getting enough sleep can further deplete our resources and ability to look after ourselves and achieve the things we want to achieve, so focusing on our sleep quality can make a big difference.



Getting a good night sleep can often be a struggle for people who have experienced trauma. People may experience difficulties falling or staying asleep along with feeling fearful of having frightening dreams. When it gets darker and quieter our minds may be flooded by thoughts that we may have been trying to avoid during the day when we are awake. For some people the night time was when traumatic events occurred so this can leave people feeling afraid of going to bed.

What can help?

- **A relaxing environment.** Focusing on ensuring that your bedroom feels relaxing and pleasant to support you to get to sleep and stay asleep.
- **Keeping a sleep diary.** This can help you to determine how much sleep you are getting and how this affects you the following day.
- **Sticking to a bedtime routine.** Go to bed and wake up at the same time each day. A sleep routine allows our bodies to re-set and adjust to a regular pattern. When establishing a routine, it is important not to 'snooze' your alarm or lie in and do not nap during the day. If you find that you are unable to fall asleep after getting into bed after 20 minutes, get up. Go into another room and do an activity that does not involve too much stimulation (eg reading). When you begin to feel sleepy go back into your room and try to sleep again. Repeat this process if you are unable to sleep after 20 minutes again. This will help prepare you to sleep. Drink a herbal tea, read a book, have a bath or listen to a relaxation exercise. Reduce stimulation before bed and do not use any electronics in the bedroom – no phone, computer, iPad or television. Avoid caffeine, alcohol, stimulants, highly spiced or sugary foods in the evening. Avoid violent TV shows or disturbing books before bed.
- **Managing anxious thoughts that keep you awake.** Consider using a gratitude journal. As you get into bed, think of five things (big or small) from the day that you enjoyed or feel grateful for. Some people find it helpful to keep a notepad next to the bed so that they can write down what is bothering them with the intention to think about it the following day. That way you can train yourself not to focus on it as you try to sleep.

Further reading and resources:

Every Mind Matters website provide practical sleep guidance for common sleep difficulties. You can access this at www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/sleep

This book has a useful chapter on how to improve sleep for people who have experienced trauma. Boon, S., Steele, K., and Van der Har, O., (2011); *Coping with Trauma Related Dissociation*. Norton

	What time did you go to bed and how long did it take for you to fall asleep? How did you feel when you went to bed?	Did you have any difficulties with your sleep? What were they? If you woke up during the night how many times did you wake up?	What time did you wake up? How did you feel when you woke up?	Total number of hours slept	How would you rate your quality of sleep from 1 - 10?
Monday					
Tuesday					
Wednesday					
Thursday					
Friday					
Saturday					
Sunday					