

Let's Talk: Getting a good night's rest

Presenter: Erica Hanlon, LCSW & Life Coach

Visual Cue: Erica waking up in bed with a big yawn.

Did you know, that sleep is one of the most important parts of your overall health? It affects everything from your immune system to your weight. But lots of people aren't getting the kind of sleep that they need to. So today's video is all about quick and easy tips you can start using to improve your sleep.

Turn out the lights

So most adults need somewhere between seven and nine hours of sleep a night. Now the good news is that regardless of what kind of hours you work, whether you're working graveyard shifts or you're working during the day, just making small changes can drastically improve the quality and the quantity of your sleep.

And a great starting place is simply to pay attention to light. What kind of light are you exposing yourself to and when are you exposing yourself to it? So when our brains see light, they interpret that as daylight and it helps us feel more awake.

So when you wake up in the morning, try turning on some light switches and expose yourself to light to help yourself feel more awake and alert. And when you're going to bed, you can do things like make sure that your environment is dark as possible. So even if you're driving home in the morning after working overnight, you can wear sunglasses and it will help kind of send some signals to your brain that it is getting darker outside and it's time to start relaxing. So maybe invest in some room darkening curtains, maybe turn that alarm clock around so it's facing the wall and turn off the lights.

Avoid these things before bed

Now what you do when you're awake has a huge impact on the quality and the quantity of your sleep. So here are some things to consider. Look at your diet. If you're eating spicy foods right before you go to bed, it may be creating stomach upset or acid reflux, which will interfere with your ability to fall asleep.

Also caffeine. I love coffee, but I can't have any caffeine at least six hours before I go to bed because it's a stimulant and it keeps me awake. So consider limiting your caffeine several hours before you go to bed.

And alcohol. I know, I know. It makes you feel sleepy. It makes you feel relaxed, but it actually interferes with the quality of your sleep. So you're more likely to toss and turn all night long, and wake up feeling tired. So maybe limit the alcohol to one or two glasses a night and maybe less frequently during the week.

And devices. Now I know a lot of people lay in bed and they scroll on their phones before they go to sleep. The problem with that is that devices like your cell phone, your laptop and your television, they emit a special kind of light called blue light. And I know we just talked about light, but blue light is the most problematic light for your brain because your brain really interprets blue light as daylight. And it will really interfere with your circadian rhythms if you're looking at blue light devices before you go to sleep.

Try these things to relax

And finally, what kind of things are you doing before you go to bed? Are they relaxing? Are you watching the news? Are you scrolling social media looking at all these terrible things? Maybe let's not do that.

Think of some things you can do to help you feel relaxed and calm before you go to bed. You can write down your worries from the day, you can, read a boring book or a relaxing book. Paper form so you're not getting that blue light. Maybe take a hot bath or a hot shower. Do things that make you feel nice and relaxed, and sleepy before you go to bed.

So I hope you found these tips helpful. You don't have to do all of them unless you're a superstar overachiever. Just making small tweaks can greatly impact the quality and the quantity of your sleep, which will improve the quality of your life. Nighty-night.

Resources For Living

The EAP is administered by Resources For Living, LLC. This material is for informational purposes only. Information is not a substitute for professional health care and is not meant to replace the advice of health care professionals. Contact a health care professional with any questions or concerns about specific health care needs.

©2021 Resources For Living | 44.27.447.1-RFL (1/21)