

Thank you!

Thanks so much for coming to today's talk or watching the recording, as part of the Mental health and wellbeing conference 2024!

We discussed the three systems which control the timing and quality of your sleep, and how to influence them:

- **Body clocks, or circadian rhythms**
- **Sleep pressure**
- **Stress-recovery balance**

When we're short of sleep, the brain leans towards stress, rather than recovery. A situation which feels manageable when we're well rested can feel worrying or overwhelming when we're short of sleep.

To switch off the racing mind, we need to become better at switching off the stress response. Ideas for doing this include..

- A familiar wind down routine, perhaps including a warm bath or shower
- Practicing mindfulness, breathwork or listening to calming music
- Writing a to do list or journalling about the day
- Thought blocking – repeating 'THE' every few seconds

There are some ideas to strengthen your natural sleep systems in this handout. Print the final page to track your new habits for a week.

Please feel free to email me if you have any questions we didn't get to during the talk. To receive a free personalised set of sleep strategies, you can also complete a free sleep assessment at www.TheSleepScientist.com.

Many thanks for your curiosity and enthusiasm!

Sophie

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Sleep Habit Checklist

Tick whether each sleep habit is something you already do, or something you could start doing. The aim is to close the gap and **strengthen 1 or more sleep habits** over the next few weeks.

BODY CLOCKS

	Do it now	Could try this
Wake up at the same time as often as possible	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Enjoy at least 10min daylight or bright light soon after waking up	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Finish eating your last meal 2 hours or more before bed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stay alcohol-free	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use night settings on technology in the evening	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Keep screens out of the bedroom	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Keep your bedroom cool & dark e.g. use blackout blinds, or an eye mask	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

SLEEP PRESSURE

Get physically active every day – aim to get moving for 30min+	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Protect a window of at least 7 hours for sleep	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Default to decaf drinks, and skip caffeine 8 hours before bed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Go to bed when you're feeling sleepy – listen to your body	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
No naps <4hr before bed; take a 10-20min power nap if sleepy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Avoid routine use of over-the-counter sleep aids	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

STRESS BALANCE

Find at least 10 minutes of 'me time' to de-stress during the day	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Put the day to rest by journalling for 15 min, or write a to do list	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Keep work and difficult conversations out of the bedroom	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Adopt a relaxing routine to get yourself ready for bed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If you're wide awake for 20 min and can't sleep, get out of bed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Allow sleep to come to you. Don't try too hard or get frustrated	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use ear plugs, a fan, white noise or audio if disturbed by noise	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Total/20 _____

Practice switching off

Although we often blame our thoughts for being unable to get to sleep, sleep is influenced by many things. You are much less likely to experience a racing mind if you have a regular wake up time, if it's dark and quiet, and if you've built up sufficient sleep pressure before getting into bed. However, here are some additional techniques which you can try to put your mind at ease:

1. Time out during the day

If your entire day is spent at 300mph, then when you switch off the light, the brain still has a lot of processing to do. It helps to 'rehearse' or practice switching off at other times of the day – not just in bed. Try and build 10 min of 'me-time' into your calendar to detach. This might mean a walk, eating a meal slowly and consciously, listening to music, practicing mindfulness or even a quick nap.

2. Putting the day to rest

After your work day, set aside 10-15 minutes to write down what you've done that day, and what you need to remember tomorrow. Write your list well before bedtime, but you can keep your list or notebook by your bed. If the same 'to-do' thoughts pop up, tell yourself they are on the page, and let them go. If you need to add new things, that's OK, Then go back to sleep.

3. Paradoxical intention (reverse psychology)

This sounds counterintuitive, but if you're awake during the night, tell yourself that this is OK. If your body needed to sleep, it would sleep. Gently try to stay awake. Enjoy the feeling of being safe and warm in your bed. You're safe where you are... (When you stop trying, sleep is more likely to come.)

4. Avoid frustration. Get out of bed.

If you really can't sleep after 20 minutes or so, get up. Get out of bed. There's no point in wrestling with it. Read a book under a side light until your eyelids feel heavy, and only then get back into bed. The worst thing for sleep is trying too hard! If you miss out on sleep one night, it's not the end of the world - just tell yourself that sleep the following night will be even better.

Sleep diary & habit tracker

Print this and stick on your fridge for a daily nudge. Write in your planned wake up & bed times. Choose up to 3 more positive sleep habits to track. At breakfast, look back at the day before, and celebrate any successes.

Start date: _____

Example

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Sunday

Sleep Plan	When will you get out of bed? (Tick if you stick to this!)	06:30 ✓						
	What time do you plan to be in bed, ready for sleep?	22:30 ✓						
Habit: 3 goals	1. e.g. natural daylight in the am	✓						
	2. e.g. stop eating 2hr before bed	✓						
	3. e.g. decaf after lunch	✓						
Your sleep last night...	How many hours were you in bed in total?	8 hours						
	How many times did you wake up? How long for?	2 (1 hour)						
	How many hours were you asleep in total?	6 hours						
	Sleep Efficiency?* = hrs asleep/hrs in bed * 100	75%						
	Sleep quality? 5=great, 1 = poor Did anything interfere with sleep?	4 too hot						
	How was your energy yesterday, out of 10?	7						

*An average sleep efficiency of >80% across the week is a healthy target

