SLUMBER STRATEGIES
Building Habits To Help You Be A Better Sleeper

"Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep!" That loud alarm's telling you it's time to get up, but the snooze button's calling your name. Don't give in! Those extra minutes may sound good, but they just lead to deeper sleep, and when the alarm hits again, you'll feel groggier. This snooze routine is just one bad sleep habit – ever find yourself chugging caffeine or craving a nap? Good sleep is key to feeling your best. So, ditch those bad habits, make a game plan, and wake up ready to rock your day!

Create the ideal Space

Creating a sleep-friendly environment comes down to personal preference, but there are various elements to consider. A comfortable mattress and supportive pillows ensure your spine gets proper support to avoid aches and pains. Make the space inviting for sleep by keeping it organized and clutter-free. Keep the space quiet, dark, and cool. The ideal temperature varies by choice, but research supports sleeping in a room that's 65 to 68 degrees.

consider bedtime light

By now, you're aware of the studies suggesting that using electronic screens before sleep may impact the production of melatonin, a hormone that helps us fall asleep. While this is true, the quantity of light matters more than its source, so we should prioritize reducing overall light exposure before bedtime instead of worrying about our screens. Consider dimming your lights when brushing your teeth and getting ready for bed. Aim to minimize light exposure 30 to 60 minutes before bedtime for improved sleep.

ban pets from your bed

We love our furry friends, but it's best to keep them off the bed when we're sleeping. Their sleep patterns may not align with human sleep cycles, leading to disturbances when they are active. Pets can also limit the available sleeping space, especially if you're already sharing the bed with a human partner. Pets can introduce allergens, like pet dander, that may trigger allergies and negatively impact sleep quality. To promote optimal sleep hygiene, it's best to establish a separate sleeping area for Fido.

wind down before bed

Our brains are wired for thought. This is beneficial when we want to be productive, but not when it's time to get some shut-eye. To counteract this, consider processing your thoughts or emotions through journaling or creating a to-do list for the next day. Engaging in relaxation techniques like meditation, breathing exercises, or even reading can help calm the mind and signal to your body that it's time to relax. As you approach the end of your day, avoid activities that stimulate the mind, allowing yourself the opportunity to transition into a more peaceful state.

LIMIT YOUR NAPS

Napping can be beneficial. It can help increase energy, improve mood, and boost productivity and concentration. But naps shouldn't be used as a substitute for sleep at night, and when you do sneak in a snooze, do so wisely. If you nap for too long or too late in the day, it can throw off your sleep schedule and make it harder to get to sleep when you want to. The best time to nap is in the early afternoon and at least 8 to 9 hours before your usual bedtime. Twenty minutes is the ideal nap length. Set a timer for 30 minutes, which gives you 5 to 10 minutes to fall asleep and about 20 minutes to rest.

consider your diet

Eating certain foods and drinks close to bedtime can disrupt sleep due to factors like caffeine content, high sugar levels, or potential indigestion. Stimulants, such as caffeine found in coffee and some teas, can hinder our ability to fall asleep. Heavy or spicy meals may cause discomfort and acid reflux, disrupting the sleep cycle. Conversely, including sleep-promoting foods rich in tryptophan, such as turkey or nuts, and maintaining a balanced diet can positively impact sleep by aiding the production of sleep-inducing neurotransmitters.

EMPLOYEE WELLNESS SOLUTIONS NETWORK

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Crafting the Perfect Evening Workout for a restful night

Exercise during the day significantly contributes to a restful night's sleep, but if done improperly in the evening, it may be disruptive. Your evening workout should encourage relaxation and be a gentle progression into sleep. The goal is to slow down your heart rate, calm your mind, and release the accumulated stress and tension of the day.

5 Components for Your Evening Workout

Time it Right
Planning your workout in the early evening allows your heart rate to gradually decline, preventing it from interfering with your ability to sleep later on.

Take it Slow
Opt for slow-paced activities such as yoga, stretching, and low-impact exercises. These activities are best for releasing stress and tension, creating an environment conducive to relaxation.

Consider Evening Hunger
tackle post-exercise hunger without overburdening digestion. A small, light snack like hummus and crackers or vegetables strikes the right balance, so you don't go to bed hungry.

Remember Proper Breathing
Integrate proper breathing techniques throughout your workout. This not only enhances the effectiveness of your exercise but also sets the stage for a more restful and relaxed state post-workout.

Cool Down and Warm Up
Finish your workout with a gradual cool down and follow it with a warm bath, which can be especially effective in soothing and relaxing your body. As your body temperature decreases, it serves as a natural cue that it's time to prepare for sleep.

Sleep Better with the 10-3-2-1-0 Sleep Rule

The 10-3-2-1-0 sleep rule isn't really a rule at all – it's a routine. It regulates when you should stop doing certain activities before your normal bedtime to ensure proper rest.

10	**The number of hours before bed when you should stop consuming caffeine.** Caffeine enters your bloodstream 30-60 minutes after you consume it, and has a half-life of 3-5 hours. It affects your body by blocking adenosine receptors that make you sleepy and reducing slow-wave sleep. It can also increase anxiety and restlessness.
3	**The number of hours before bed you should limit food and alcohol.** Avoiding food and drink before bed helps prevent discomfort and digestive issues that arise when the body is actively processing food while you sleep. Studies have also found that sleeping less can make you eat more throughout the day – thus developing a vicious cycle.
2	**The number of hours before bed you should stop working.** Working before bed heightens your anxiety and stimulates your brain. The screens you use also emit blue light that makes your body think it's time to wake up. If the anxiety of having more to do is keeping you up, try creating a to-do list to tackle the next day.
1	**The number of hours before bed you should avoid screen time.** On average, we spend 50 minutes on our phones before bed, and most of us keep an electronic device in our bedroom. The information you're receiving stimulates your brain, making you anxious. Keep devices out of your room or at least put them on silent mode.
0	**The number of times you should hit the snooze button.** Pressing the button disrupts REM sleep. It can even trigger a fight-or-flight response. If you're having trouble resisting that button, try moving your alarm clock further away from you. You'll have to get up to turn off that annoying sound and won't want to stay in bed.

Sources: Sleep Foundation | Sleep Doctor | Health Hub | Images by Freepik