48 SLEEP HACKS

DRAMATICALLY IMPROVE YOUR SLEEP AND ENERGY

THE Sleep Advisor

Introduction

Do you ever nod off at your desk in the middle of the day, so tired and drowsy that it almost hurts?

You know the feeling. Your eyelids have giant weights attached to them, and the words on your computer screen start to blur. Maybe you could close your eyes for a few seconds, and no one will notice.

That feeling is even worse when you're sitting in one of those after-lunch meetings that drag on for so long that the seconds feel like hours. If you close your eyes during one of those meetings, someone is bound to notice!

You long for quitting time so you can go home and snuggle up in your warm, comfortable bed for a long night of blissful sleep. But then, once you're in bed, you stare at the ceiling, wide-awake, and thinking of everything that happened today. You even come up with some witty one-liners that you wish you'd thought of during the weekly production meeting.

THE **Sleep Advisor**

It seems like no matter how much sleep we get at night, we all wake up in the morning saying, "just five more minutes!" And yet, when we're finally able to go to bed after fulfilling the responsibilities of our hectic, daily lives, our minds race as we think about all the things we have to do tomorrow.

What if there was a way to wake up energized, maintain that feeling throughout the day, and then float effortlessly off to sleep each night?
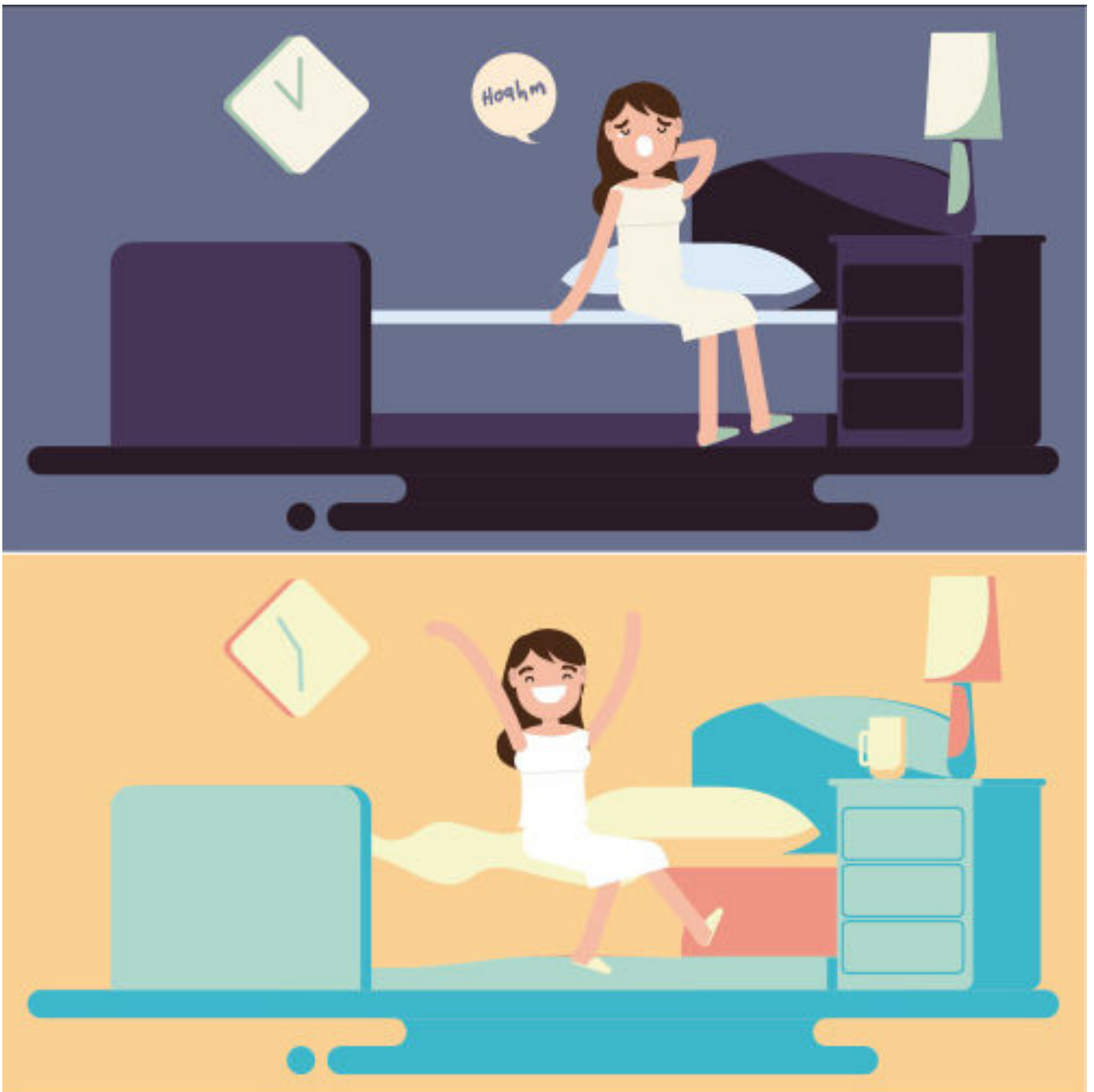
With a few easy and simple adjustments to your daily routine and sleep environment, anyone can experience vast improvements in the quality of their sleep and could even find ways to reduce your overall need for sleep.

In this e-book, I share my **48 favorite sleep hacks**, so that you can have your best night of rest tonight, and every night.

Part 1

Sleep Schedules

Sleep Hack 1

Wake up at the same time every day

A lot of us use the weekends and vacation time to catch up on sleep. It turns out that this habit is ineffective, and can even be harmful. While we may initially feel better rested, the effects are only temporary. Further, this technique can backfire when it's time for bed.

Here's why: our bodies have an internal 24-hour clock, or circadian rhythm, that dictate when we're drowsy and wide-awake. It's based on the earth's cycle of sunlight and darkness. So, when it's daylight, we're likely to feel awake, and when it's dark, our bodies send signals and release melatonin, indicating that it's time for bed.

If we've deprived ourselves of shuteye during the week, it's tempting to sleep in on a day off. But, doing this throws off our internal clock, so it can be more difficult to fall asleep that night. When that happens, we get less sleep, and when the alarm goes off the next morning, the cycle of feeling like we haven't gotten enough sleep perpetually continues.

Over time, this cycle of sleep deprivation combined with trying to catch up leads to an increased risk of health challenges, including obesity, cardiovascular disease, and type 2 diabetes.

The solution is to wake up at the same time every day, even on weekends. It may seem like getting up early on your day off will be extra challenging, but you'll notice after a couple of weeks of trying this sleep hack that you feel better rested.

Sleep Hack 2

Learn more about sleep cycles

Almost 100 years ago, scientists discovered that humans sleep in cycles of 90 minutes. These sleep cycles have five stages, including light sleep, deep sleep, and REM (rapid eye movement) sleep.

The stages of a 90-minute sleep cycle look like this:
- Stage 1 – Sleepiness
- Stage 2 – Light Sleep
- Stages 3 & 4 – Deep Sleep
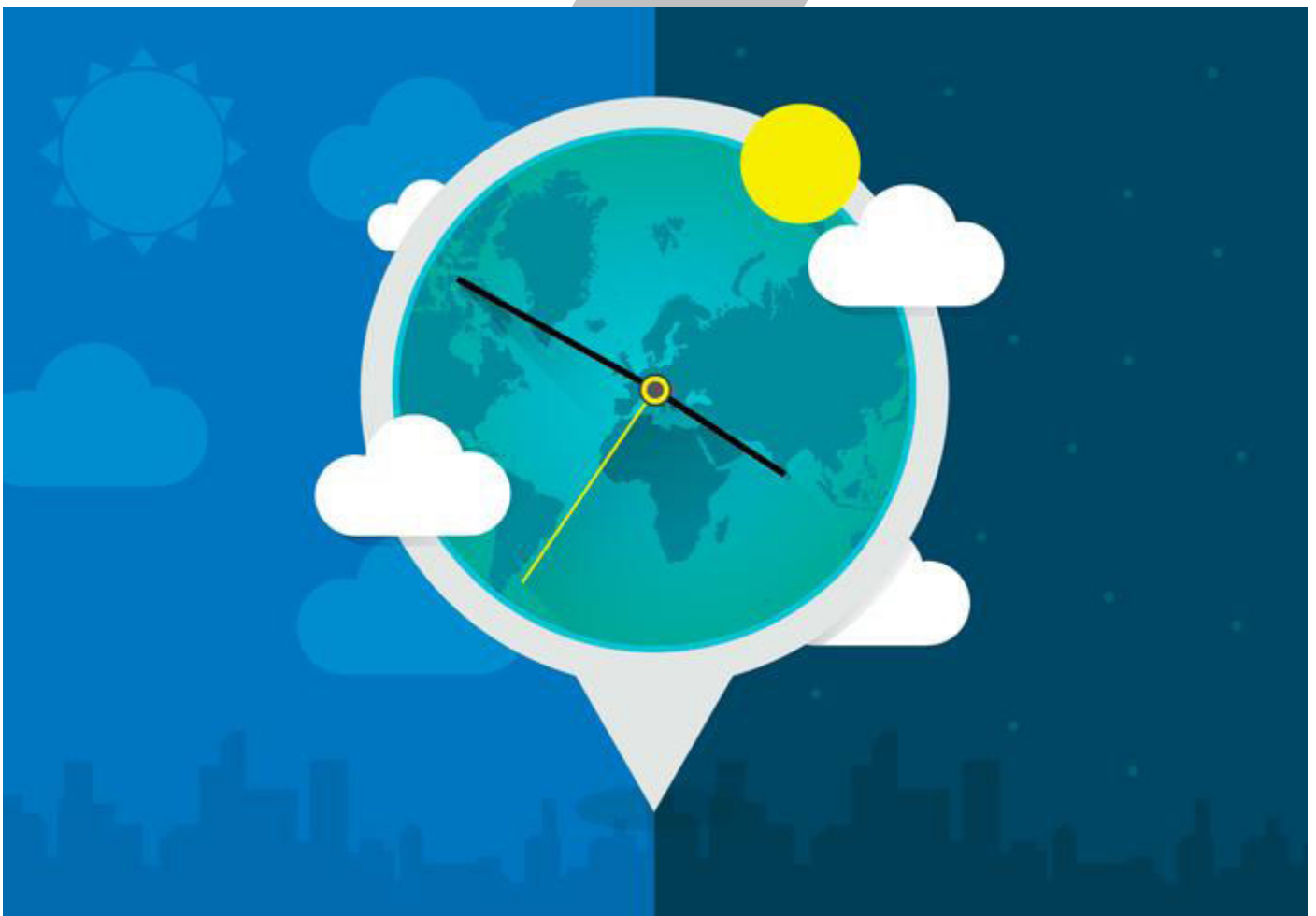- Stage 5 – REM/dreaming

Photo Credit: Vecteezy By Spearheart0

THE Sleep Advisor

The key to this hack is to remember that each sleep cycle is 90 minutes long, and if you can schedule your sleeping time so that you wake up at the end of a 90-minute interval, you'll feel more refreshed when the alarm goes off. This is because Stage 1, the start of a sleep cycle, is the lightest stage of sleep. It's much easier to wake up from a light sleep than a deep sleep.

If you try waking up in the middle of a sleep cycle, you'll feel groggy, and the temptation to hit the snooze button will be overwhelming. What's interesting about this is that you can feel better rested by sleeping 6 hours in a night than sleeping for 7 hours. This is because 6 hours is equal to 4 full sleep cycles, while 7 hours fall short of five full cycles.

The main challenge people face when implementing this sleep hack is if they have difficulty falling asleep quickly. Taking too much time to fall asleep, or not being able to predictably fall asleep within a set timeframe, can throw off your ability to plan waking up at the start of a new sleep cycle. For tips on how to fall asleep quickly, see Sleep Hacks 33 and 35.

Sleep Hack 3

Reduce your overall sleep need

Imagine what you could accomplish if you could have two extra hours per day of productive time. You'd be able to get more work done, spend quality time with your family, or enjoy a hobby.

The most obvious thing to cut out of our schedules to have this bonus time is sleep. The problem with this idea is that if we don't get enough sleep, the extra time we have each day isn't productive.

But what if we could sleep less AND have enough energy to get more done?

There are two ways I've found that will allow you to cut up to 2 hours per day out of your sleep schedule without feeling fatigued.

> "Quality of sleep is more important than quantity of sleep when it comes to feeling rested and rejuvenated."
>
> -Journal of Psychosomatic Research

THE **Sleep Advisor**

1. Exercise to increase strength and stamina

Regular exercise (three to five times per week) builds up your body's strength and stamina. Our cardiovascular systems improve, and we're able to run at peak performance without expending as much energy.

To get the most out of this technique, opt for exercise in the afternoon, at least 4 to 6 hours before your scheduled bedtime.

This allows the body to come down from its endorphin rush and get higher quality sleep at night. Higher quality sleep also reduces the overall need for shuteye.

2. Gradually reduce the number of hours you sleep

Each week, gradually delay the time you go to bed, or get up slightly earlier. For example, let's say you want to go from sleeping 8 hours a night to just 6 hours. Deciding to set your alarm clock two hours ahead of your normal schedule isn't going to work, at least not sustainably.

Instead, implement this hack in weekly 20 to 30-minute increments. For your first week, either go to bed 20-30 minutes later or set your alarm for 20-30 minutes earlier. Continue cutting back by this same interval each week. By the third week, you'll be able to cut your sleeping by 60 to 90 minutes.

Sleep Hack 4

Keep a sleep log

I picked up this tip from Tim Ferriss, best selling author of multiple books including "The 4-Hour Workweek" and the "The 4-Hour Body." Tim keeps journals and logs of just about everything he does each day, from what he eats, to how he trains, and even what he's grateful for. He's explained that this helps him to pinpoint exactly what makes him successful in any given endeavor.

For example, when Tim see's a past picture of himself in peak physical condition, he'll check the date on that photo and then reference back to his journal entries to see what he was eating, how he was training and what else was happening in his life. Armed with that information, he'll recreate those habits so he can repeat his success.

The same principle holds true for sleep logs. To start a sleep log, you can either make your own sleep diary in a spreadsheet or get any number of pre-made sleep journals. Which variables you track are ultimately up to you, but here are some ideas to get you started:

Photo Credit: Vecteezy by Jellyfishwater

THE **Sleep** Advisor

- The time you went to bed
- How long it took to fall asleep
- The time you woke up
- Whether you got out of bed or woke up in the middle of the night
- How many times you hit snooze in the morning
- If you took a nap that day and how long it lasted
- Whether you consumed caffeine or alcohol
- If you exercised
- What you ate
- A rating of your sleep quality that night
- A rating of how you felt in the morning
- Whether you felt hot, cold or comfortable that night

After tracking a number of these variables over time, you may notice patterns about experiencing better quality sleep when you exercise, or worse quality of sleep when you eat certain foods.

Sleep Hack 5

Explore Polyphasic Sleep

Polyphasic sleep simply means breaking your sleep into two blocks instead of time. This is in contrast to monophasic sleep, in which you sleep only once per day. Most of us sleep monophasically, where we go to bed at night, wake up in the morning and that's the only time we sleep.

In several countries, it's the norm to be a polyphasic sleeper. We've all heard of Latin nations who take afternoon siestas (naps), and this is a common form of polyphasic sleeping. In fact, it's becoming common for more progressive American companies to have nap rooms, where employees can go at any time during the workday to rest and recharge.

This type of sleep, in which you sleep for 5 to 8 hours at night and then take a 15-90 minute nap during the day, is technically called "biphasic" sleep, and it is considered a healthy and natural alternative to monophasic sleep.

In recent years, the concept of polyphasic sleep has evolved into true sleep hacking, where experimenters bio hack their nocturnal patterns so they only need 2 to 4 hours of sleep per night.

Polyphasic sleeping is typically structured one of two ways:

- You nap for 20 minutes every 4 hours, for a total of 2 hours of sleep per day
- You have a 3-hour "core sleep" at night with three separate 20-minute naps during the day

While this type of polyphasic sleeping can help you temporarily get more time in your day, it's **not recommended for the long term**. First, it creates a sleep deficit, which, when chronic, puts the body at risk for long-term health consequences. Second, the schedule must be adhered to strictly in order to be effective. Unless your days are flexible, you're bound to run into challenges that will throw off the schedule.

Sleep Hack 6

Explore the 28-Hour Day Concept

Instead of adhering to a 7-day week consisting of 24 hours per day with the rest of the planet, you can explore the concept of a 6-day week that has 28 hours in a day. The 28-hour concept pushes your clock forward, so you can no longer predictably rely on external factors like light and darkness to cue your body when it's time to sleep.

The advantage of this schedule is that allows you to enjoy late evenings and going out on the weekends without experiencing a sleep deficit. The disadvantage is that your routine will be completely thrown off and if you have a 9 to 5 corporate job, you'll never be able to negotiate this schedule with your boss.

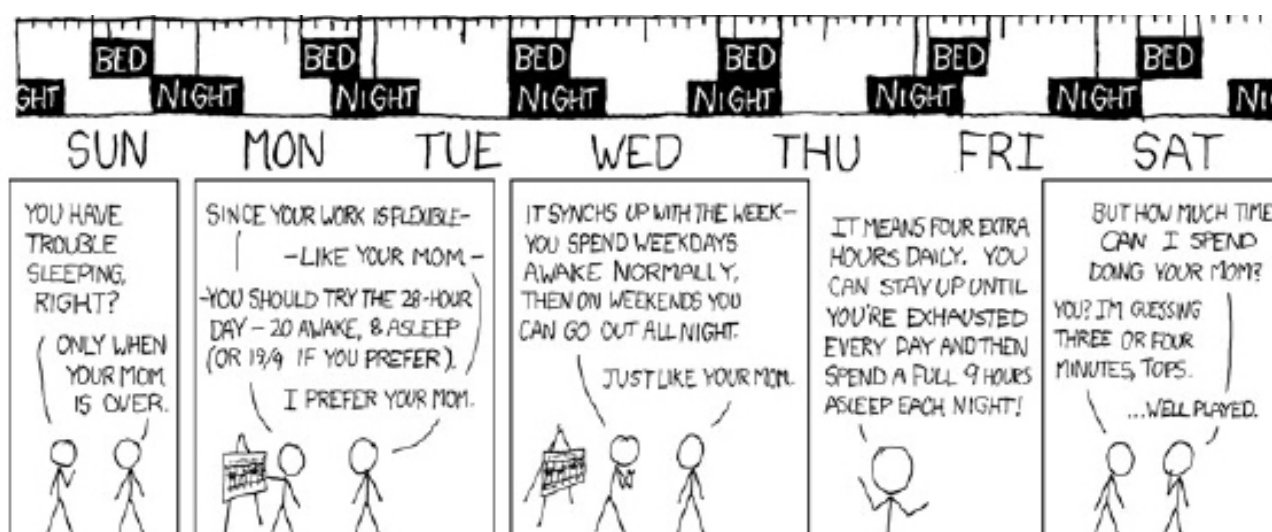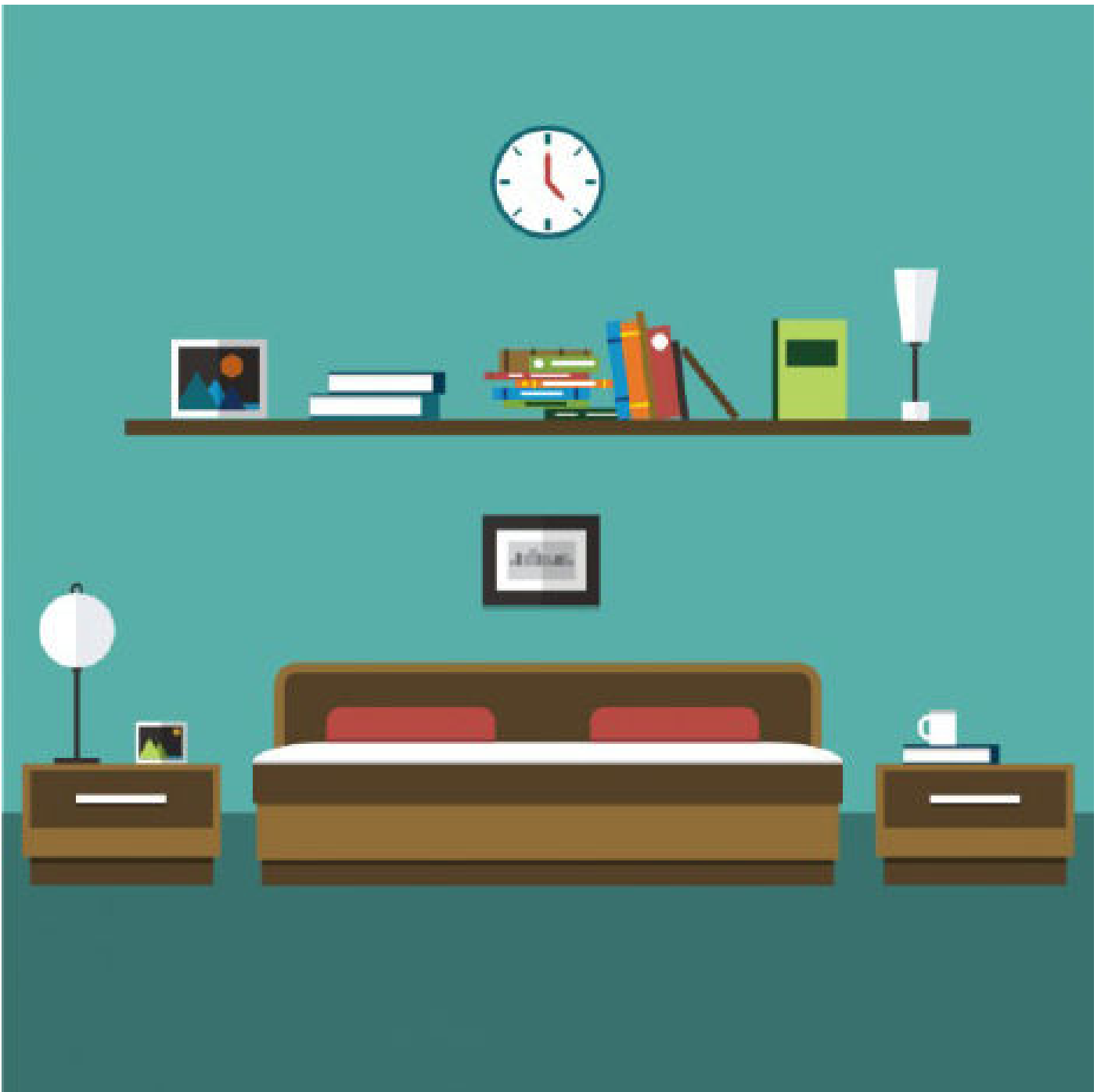Here's an illustration of how your new 6-day week would look like:

Photo credit: https://xkcd.com/320/

Part 2

Sleep Environment

Sleep Hack 7

Sleep in a dark environment

Because our circadian rhythms are so strong and linked to our outside environment, any light that we let into our bedroom can disrupt our sleep and negatively affect its quality.

In order to have restful sleep, our bodies rely on the production of melatonin and serotonin from our pineal gland. The pineal gland is shaped like a pinecone (hence the name) and is nestled in the center of our brain. It's often referred to as our "third eye" because it's also associated with supernatural occurrences like telepathy and psychic vision.

This gland is sensitive to any type of light, including LEDs from alarm clocks and computers, as well as a glow from your phone or television. Exposure to light, including and especially turning on the light to go to the bathroom at night will cease the production of melatonin. So, if you do get up in the middle of the night to relieve yourself, do so with the light off.

If you're unable to get rid of all lights in the bedroom, try using a sleeping mask over your eyes to block out all artificial light.

Sleep Hack 8

Sleep in a colder room

It may seem obvious, but the more congruently we live to how nature intended, the better. This extends to the way we sleep. As humans, we did not evolve with the benefit of having central heat in our homes. Added to that is the fact that both our body's core temperature as well as the external nighttime temperatures tend to drop, which are biological cues that signal our internal clock that it's nighttime. If we keep our bedroom warm, this throws off our natural balance.

It's better to keep our sleeping environment cool to mimic how we would sleep in nature. A word of caution here: don't sleep with the room too brisk because being uncomfortably cold can also cause you to wake up and disrupt your otherwise restful sleep.

> "Your bedroom should be between 60 to 67 degrees Fahrenheit for optimal sleep. Temperatures above 75 degrees and below 54 degrees can disrupt sleep."
> -Dr. Christopher Winter

THE **Sleep** Advisor

Sleep Hack 9

Eliminate any noise if possible

This may seem obvious, but even the slightest bit of noise can jar you from peaceful sleep and make your rest and restoration period subpar. Noisy neighbors, a snoring partner and street traffic can cause a cacophony of sound that prevent you from falling asleep or regularly wake you throughout the night.

I recommend two ways to eliminate noise.

1. Noise canceling headphones

Look for noise canceling headphones that are lightweight and comfortable to sleep in. My favorite is the Bose Quiet Comfort 20 Acoustic Noise Cancelling Headphones. The ear bud is perfectly designed to seal in the near and block out noise while having super soft tips that you can barely feel.
They even have an "aware" setting that allows you to hear a small fraction of external noise, which is helpful if you're worried about hearing your alarm clock in the morning or you need to listen out for your kids.

2. Ear plugs

This is a low-tech but more cost-effective solution if you simply want to block out noise.
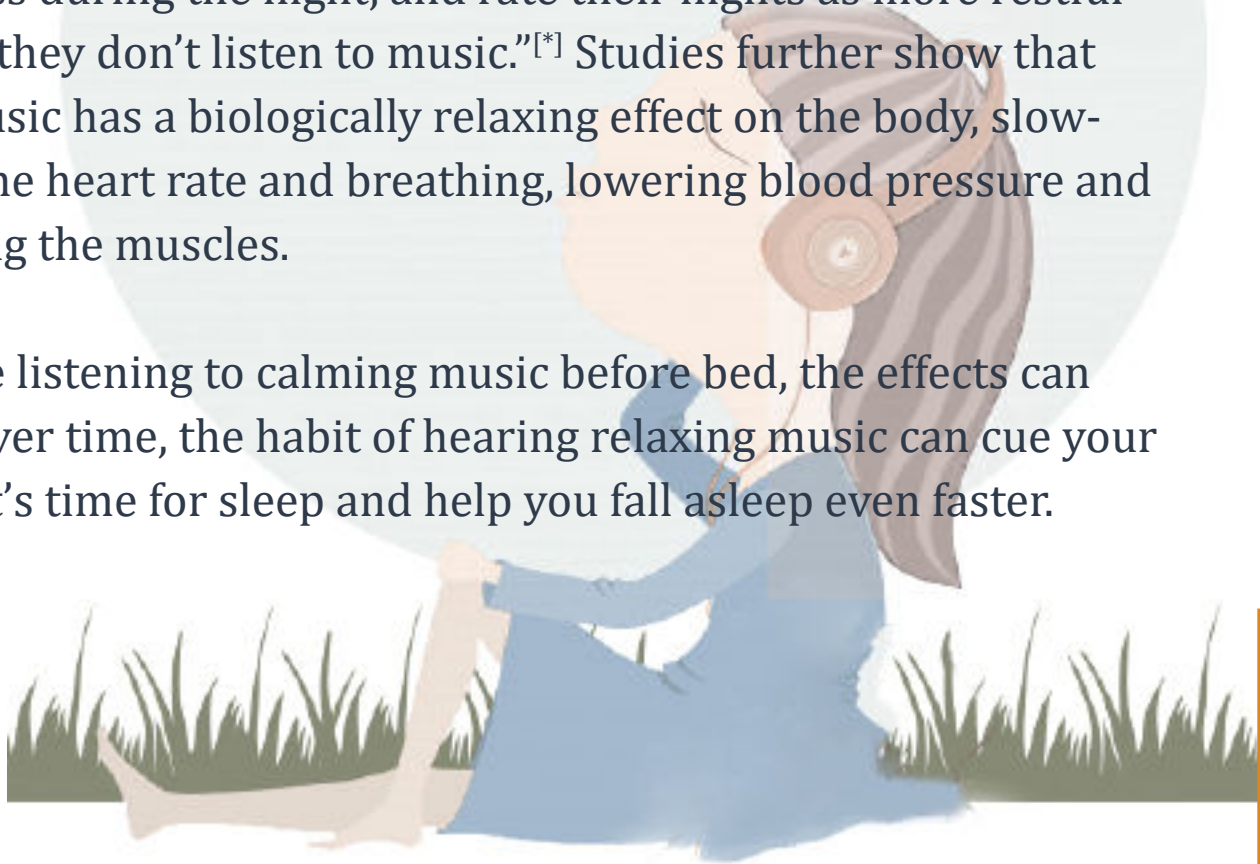
Sleep Hack 10

Listen to calming music before bed

Music is powerful. The right song can bring us back in time, make us feel intense emotion and even provoke our sense of smell by causing us to recall a memory. Imagine, then that music can also help stimulate sleep.

According to the National Sleep Foundation, "adults who listen to 45 minutes of relaxing music before bed fall asleep faster, sleep longer, wake up less during the night, and rate their nights as more restful than when they don't listen to music."[*] Studies further show that calming music has a biologically relaxing effect on the body, slowing down the heart rate and breathing, lowering blood pressure and also relaxing the muscles.

If you make listening to calming music before bed, the effects can multiply. Over time, the habit of hearing relaxing music can cue your body that it's time for sleep and help you fall asleep even faster.

*Sources:

https://sleepfoundation.org/sleep-topics/can-music-help-you-calm-down-and-sleep-better

THE **Sleep** Advisor

Sleep Hack 11

Try a White Noise Machine

Sometimes the right solution might not be to eliminate noise (Sleep Hack 9), but to
actually increase the noise. This can be done with the magic of a white noise machine, which soothes you to sleep with sound waves that range a wide range of frequencies. The white noise drowns out the sounds of your external environment, masking them with a whooshing sound similar to the soothing sounds parents make to their newborns.

Some white noise machines also come with settings called "sound-scapes," that include a variety of nature scenes like ocean waves, rainfall and forest walks.

Sleep Hack 12

Paint your bedroom in tranquil colors

It may come as a surprise that the color of your bedroom can significantly influence your sleep. According to a recent study conducted by Travelodge, people who sleep in a bedroom that's painted blue get the most sleep at night. On average, they get 7 hours and 52 minutes, which is significantly more than other colors.[*]

Blue is a prevalent color in nature. It's the same hue as our skies and oceans, and it inspires a feeling of calm. Other colors that help promote sleep include earth tones and muted shades of green, yellow, orange, gray, coral and beige.

Avoid the temptation to paint your bedroom in bold and bright colors. While intense colors like red can increase the energy of the room, they're counterproductive to sleep.

---

*   Sources:
https://www.huffingtonpost.com/oseye-boyd/best-bedroom-colors-for-s_b_9625398.html

THE **Sleep Advisor**
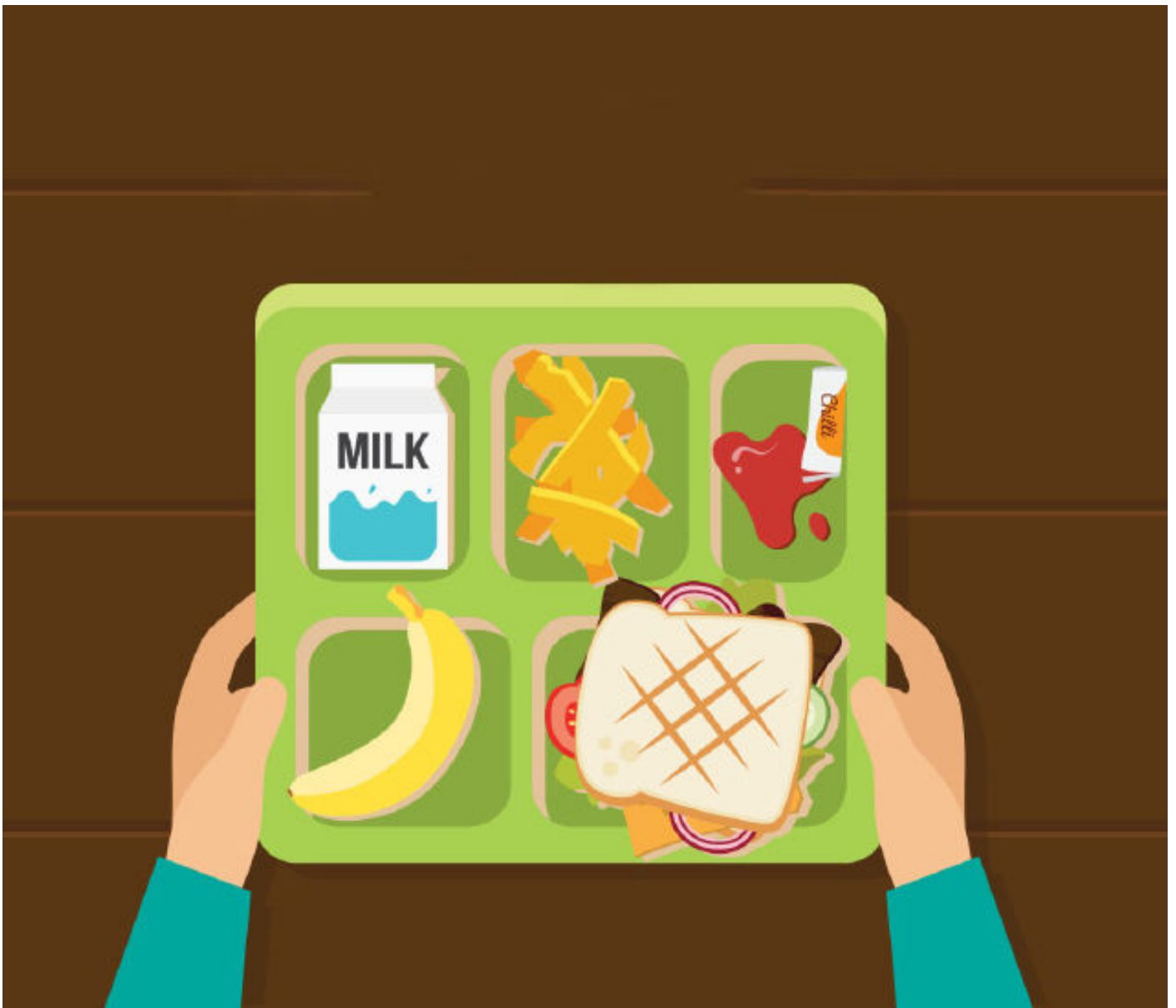
Sleep Hack 13

Try Aromatherapy

Our sense of smell is triggered through the olfactory nerve, which sends signals to our brain. These signals can trigger a response from either our autonomic nervous system (fight or flight), or our parasympathetic nervous system (calming and relaxation). Essential oils have a variety of benefits, and in the form of aromatherapy, they can be powerful aids to help you fall asleep and stay tranquil throughout the night. The most popular essential oil to aid in sleep is lavender. Lavender aromatherapy oil calms the nervous system by lowering blood pressure, heart rate and skin temperature. It also changes brain waves to a more relaxed state.

Other beneficial aromatherapy oils include, lemon, bergamot, ylang ylang, clary sage, and jasmine.

THE Sleep Advisor

Part 3

Diet and Nutrition

Sleep Hack 14

Eat breakfast every morning

Just like light and darkness are environmental cues that signal when it's time for waking and sleeping, mealtime also serves a similar function.

Our bodies come equipped with something called a "food entrainable clock"[*], which is directly linked to our body's sleep clock. To keep this clock on schedule, it's ideal to eat breakfast soon after waking, and it should be the largest meal of the day. By having an adequate breakfast, we signal our bodies that we have enough energy to get through the day. By contrast, large meals should be avoided at night, when it's time to power down.

Eating breakfast also helps regulate our hormones, including cortisol. Cortisol is a stress hormone, and too much of it will cause us to stay awake and disrupt our sleep (more on this in Sleep Hack 15).

---

* Sources:
https://www.prevention.com/health/sleep-energy/foods-and-meal-timing-linked-sleep-cycles

THE **Sleep** Advisor

Sleep Hack 15

Keep your cortisol in check

Cortisol is a stress hormone that gives us energy throughout the day. This hormone should be at its highest level in the morning, which helps us wake up and get moving. As the day goes on, it should gradually decrease and hit a low point in the evening when it's time for sleep.

Cortisol and melatonin are inversely related, meaning the more cortisol we have in our system, the less melatonin, and vice versa. We need melatonin to sleep, so if cortisol production continues at a steady pace all day long, we're going to have difficulty falling asleep at night.

Having a stressful day will trigger too much cortisol production. Deadlines, arguments, and chronic stress all contribute to elevated cortisol levels. Here's what you can do to keep your cortisol in check:

- Engage in moderate exercise (mild exercise will increase cortisol in the short term, but will still decrease it at night for optimum sleep).
- Be more aware of your thoughts and minimize negative and stressful thinking.
- Try relaxation techniques like deep breathing, yoga, and massage.
- Do more things that make you happy, especially a fun hobby.
- Maintain healthy relationships and spend time with those you love. Eliminate toxic individuals from your life.
- Consider adopting a pet. Animal companionship is known to decrease stress.
- Mind your diet and seek out foods that decrease cortisol levels, including dark chocolate, bananas, pears, green tea, probiotics, and water.
- Take supplements like fish oil and ashwagandha.

Sleep Hack 16

Avoid caffeine and alcohol in the evening

Avoiding caffeine is an obvious tip because caffeine is a stimulant, and therefore, will make falling asleep more difficult. While it's okay, and even beneficial, to consume caffeine in the morning, avoid it within 6 hours of bedtime.

Even though alcohol can make you sleepy and fall asleep faster, it should still be avoided before sleep. According to a recent study, drinking alcohol reduces the REM (our dreaming stage) sleep in your sleep cycle.[*] Disrupting or reducing REM sleep will cause drowsiness the next day and prevent you from feeling rested when you wake up.

5   Sources:
https://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/news/20130118/alcohol-sleep#1

Sleep Hack 17

Eat light food before sleep

A big meal before bed overly stimulates your digestion and prevents optimal sleep. It takes a tremendous amount of energy to process food as our body directs blood flow to our digestive system instead of to our brain. Since the brain controls the sleep process, a lack of blood to the brain means it has less energy for sleep.

Large meals right before bed can also trigger acid reflux, heartburn and even choking. Further, if you eat a particularly big meal right before bed, you're more prone to feel overly full and uncomfortable.

Sleep Hack 18

Avoid snacks before bed

It's generally not recommended to eat before bed, but if you're hungry, that's not going to help you fall asleep or stay asleep, either. Something very light (under 150 calories) can keep you satisfied throughout the night. Carbohydrate-rich snacks like toast, a small muffin, or a handful of cereal are more likely to increase the level of tryptophan in the blood. Tryptophan is an amino acid that helps induce sleep, much like turkey.

If you do opt for a pre-bedtime snack, remember to avoid the caffeine found in coffee, soda, caffeinated tea, and chocolate.
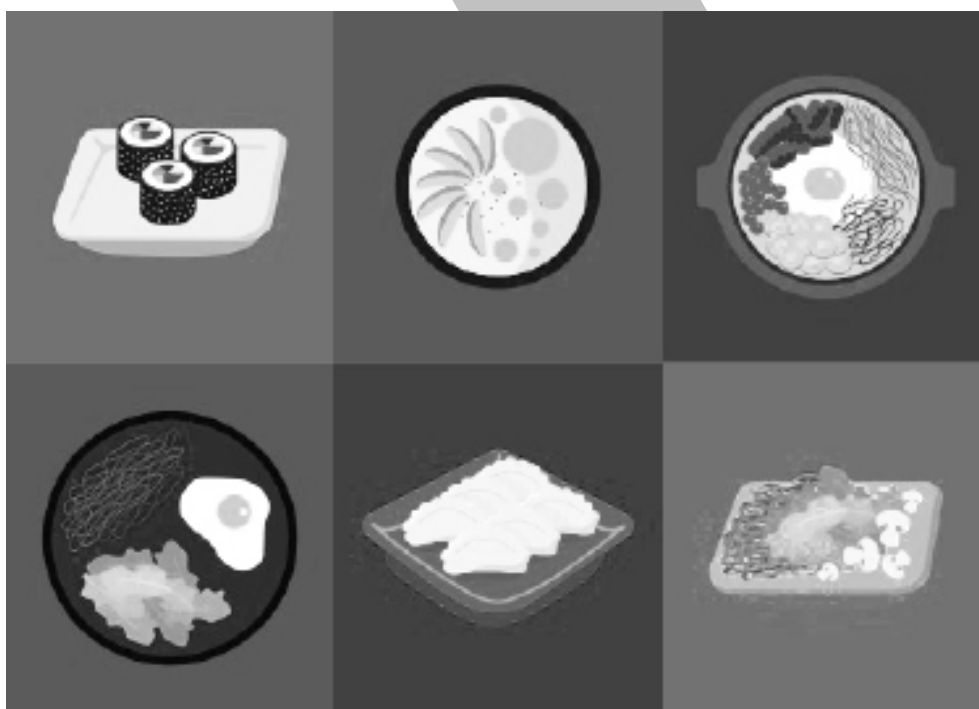
Sleep Hack 19

Eat healthy, whole and unprocessed food

In Sleep Hack 17, I mentioned that digesting food takes tremendous amounts of energy and diverts blood flow away from the brain. Processed foods, cooked foods, and animal products take more energy to process than raw and natural foods. This is because processed foods are not as easily recognized by the body and take more effort to break down.

Raw foods require less energy for absorption and digestion. In particular, raw cherries, guava, raw almonds, leafy greens, kelp and seeds like sesame, sunflower and pumpkin can promote a restful night of sleep.[*]

Sleep Hack 20

Avoid drinking too much water in the evening

Having to get up in the middle of the night to use the restroom is highly disruptive to a good night of sleep, so it's recommended to limit water intake before bed. On the other hand, proper hydration is necessary for health functions, including sleep, so where does one draw the line?

My recommendation is to make sure you drink enough water during the day and avoid drinking water or any other fluids two hours before bed.

Napping

THE **Sleep** Advisor

Sleep Hack 21

Limit your nap time

When planned carefully, a nap can help you feel more rested and alert. Naps should be practiced with caution, however. If you're an insomniac, avoid napping at all costs. Studies show that people who suffer from insomnia and take naps have much more trouble falling asleep.[*]

But because naps are so enjoyable, I'd like to share some helpful tips that will allow you to have a nap that will deliver all of the benefits of a nap without negatively affecting your nighttime sleep. After all, naps have been linked to increased productivity, better decision-making and even weight loss.[**]

Most important is to limit your naps to 25-30 minutes. This type of nap, called a power nap, is ideal for when you didn't get enough sleep the night before and you need a bit of a boost. If you find you need longer, then opt for a full 90-minute sleep cycle. Anything in between or longer, will leave you feeling groggy and interfere with your sleep later in the evening.

Whatever you do, don't nap after 4 pm. Even though it may be tempting to take a short nap when you come home from work at the end of a long day, you're more likely to have trouble falling asleep that night. If you're feeling extra groggy, try taking a walk outside. Getting fresh air and sunlight can stimulate your energy levels and negate the need for that nap after all.

---

* https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/05/28/napping-tips-expert-strat_n_3320571.html

** https://www.amazon.com/Take-Nap-Change-Your-Life/dp/0761142908/

THE **Sleep Advisor**

Sleep Hack 22

Try a coffee nap

This sounds counterintuitive, but don't knock it until you try it. Here's what you do: right before it's time to nap, drink a cup of coffee. Then go to sleep and take a 20-minute power nap. It sounds nuts, right?

Here's why it works: it takes about 20 to 30 minutes for caffeine to enter your bloodstream and take effect. So, by the time your nap is over, you'll be starting to feel the first effects of caffeine. You'll wake up more refreshed and energized than you would have without the caffeine boost.

If you try this tip, make sure you don't sleep beyond the 20-30 minutes. Set an alarm if necessary to avoid going into deep sleep. Remember, if you wake up in the middle of a sleep cycle, you're going to feel disoriented and groggy.

Sleep Hack 23

Meditation Nap

A meditation nap is like a nap without actually falling asleep. It has the rejuvenating and stimulating effects of a nap, while still maintaining a level of alertness. There are guided nap meditations available on YouTube, or you can do a meditation nap on your own.

Find a comfortable spot and either sit or lie down. Clear your thoughts, relax your muscles and take slow, even deep breaths. 15 to 20 minutes later, you'll find as refreshed as if you'd been asleep.

Part 5

Bedding and Accessories

Sleep Hack 24

Sleep on a good quality mattress your nap time

You already know that sleeping on a good quality mattress is a key component of quality sleep. In fact, a poll conducted by the National Sleep Foundation found that 92% of people say a comfortable mattress is important for them to get a good night's sleep.[*]

The wrong mattress can cause a host of problems that wreak havoc on your sleep, including allergies, sweating and back pain. If you're experiencing any of these discomforts, it's likely time to invest in something new.

The quality of a mattress is highly subjective, and price is not necessarily an indicator that one mattress is better than another. Some people prefer softer, "plush" mattresses, while others want something firm and hard. My advice is to opt for something more in the middle

Having the right sheets is also a critical component for optimal sleep. The same poll (referenced above) found that 86% of respondents also believe that comfortable sheets and bedding are important, too. I recommend getting a sheet material that works best for you. Some people prefer flannel sheets in the winter and satin sheets in the summer to help regulate temperature. Others find that t-shirt sheets have a soft and cuddly feel.

---

* Sources: https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/02/09/mattress-sleep-health_n_4740435.html
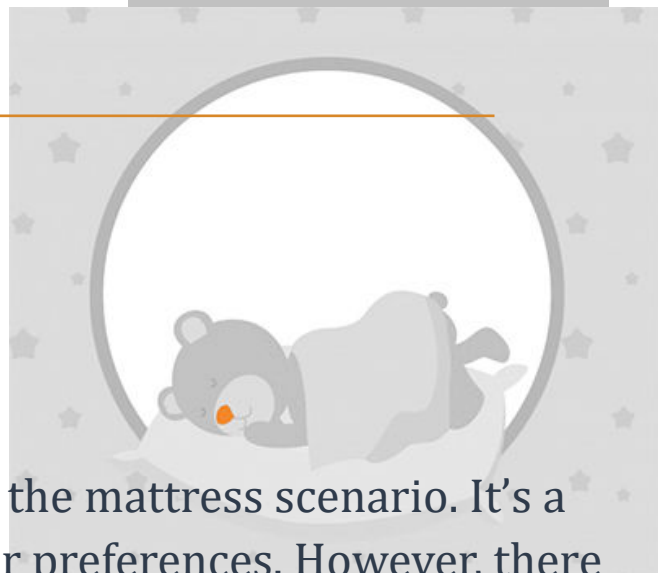
THE **Sleep Advisor**

Sleep Hack 25

Use an appropriate pillow

Finding the right pillow is similar to the mattress scenario. It's a highly personal choice based on your preferences. However, there are a few universal rules to follow when selecting a pillow to make sure that you get the best night of sleep possible, depending on your sleep position.

People who sleep on their back need a pillow that supports the natural curve of their spine. This will be a lower profile pillow that still provides proper support under the head, neck, and shoulders. It can also be helpful to put another pillow underneath the knees to prevent back strain.

Side sleepers should use thicker pillows to support the head and neck, ensuring that the spine maintains a natural line. Placing a firm pillow between the knees also helps to keep the spine in a neutral position. I also recommend a latex pillow rather than a foam or feature pillow for optimal comfort and support.

For stomach sleepers, a flat pillow is necessary to avoid putting excessive stress on the back and neck. If you sleep on your stomach, avoid the fluffy, high loft pillows. You may also want to get a second pillow (also flat) and place under your stomach or pelvis to keep your lower back in line.

Sleep Hack 26

Consider a cooling/heating mattress pad

A cooling/heating mattress pad is like a thermostat for your bed.

It can keep you cool or warm all night long with the simple push of a button. What I particularly love about this technology is that you set the exact temperature you want, and the pad will maintain that temperature all night long. This puts an end to waking up drenched in sweat or shivering with cold because the temperature of your bedroom changed during the night.

These pads have other unique advantages. First, they're ideal for couples. How many times have you been hot or cold while your partner is equally uncomfortable, but for the opposite reason? With a dual pad, you can set your own preferred temperature, and your partner can set theirs. Not only does this end an argument, but it also prevents you from waking up due to their excessive tossing, turning and complaining about the temperature.

Another big advantage (and something that will definitely help you sleep at night), is how much money you'll save with one of these. Think about it this way: if your bedroom is too hot or cold, you typically use an air conditioner or heater to regulate the temperature of the entire room. With a cooling/heating mattress pad, on the other hand, you control only where you sleep – the bed! Now that you don't have to worry about exorbitant electric bills, you can sleep even more soundly.

THE **Sleep Advisor**

Part 6

Sleep Technology and Gadgets

Sleep Hack 27

Use sleep trackers

Business guru, Peter Drucker, is credited with the quote, "If you can't measure it, you can't improve it." This quote is particularly true when it comes to sleep. If you're interested in improving and optimizing your sleep, you have to measure it.

But how?

I recommend a sleep tracker to measure your sleep throughout the night and learn what needs to improve. A sleep tracker works by monitoring how much (and how well) you sleep each night. Most sleep trackers do this by tracking your movement throughout the night to see how much of the night you spend sleeping. Some of the more advanced sleep trackers also measure your heart rate, skin temperature and breathing.

Not only do the these devices keep track of your sleep, they also provide detailed analytics so you can see reports of how well you slept and get tips on what you can do to improve. Some even include coaching programs, as well as special lights and sounds to help you fall asleep, stay asleep and wake up refreshed.

Sleep trackers can even alert you at the end of a sleep cycle (see Sleep Hack 2), so you can automatically wake up without having to pre-plan and calculate your sleep cycles prior to going to bed.

THE **Sleep Advisor**

There are two main types of sleep trackers: wearable sleep trackers (including the Fitbit) and bed-based sleep trackers that usually include a sensor that fits under your mattress or sheet. Wearable sleep trackers tend to be more costly, but they have the bonus of including overall activity trackers.

Sleep Hack 28

Use a sleep mask

Sleep masks are the best way to ensure that you sleep in total darkness. If you have any type of light in the room (even the LED from an alarm clock) it can interfere with how well you sleep and even inhibit melatonin production, which is required for sleep.

Sleep masks, also referred as eye masks, are effective at blocking out all light. It's important to look for a mask that doesn't allow any light to creep in from underneath the mask. Comfort is also important, as you don't want something that feels heavy, tight or restrictive on your face while you're trying to sleep. You can opt for an adjustable sleep mask to guarantee a proper fit.

Another factor to consider is the material of the sleep mask. If you have sensitive skin or a complexion that is prone to acne, you should seek out a mask that is made of natural fibers like cotton or silk. The Purefly Sleep Mask is a top choice because it's adjustable and super soft.
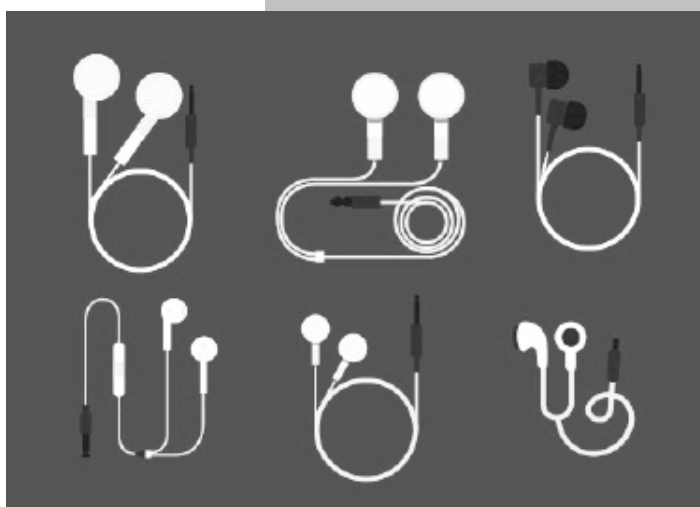
Sleep Hack 29

Use noise canceling headphones

In Sleep Hack 9, I briefly mentioned noise-canceling headphones and recommended the Bose Quiet Comfort 20 Acoustic Noise Cancelling Headphones as a top choice. They're expensive, so if you'd prefer a more economical solution, I'd also recommend the Meidong Bluetooth headphones. They're a fraction of the cost of the Bose and still perform well for the price tag.

The sound quality (or lack thereof) is premium and they're lightweight enough to be comfortable when sleeping.
ers (including the Fitbit) and bed-based sleep trackers that usually include a sensor that fits under your mattress or sheet. Wearable sleep trackers tend to be more costly, but they have the bonus of including overall activity trackers.

Some people would rather not have something inside their ears while sleeping. The protrusion of the ear buds can be uncomfortable for side sleepers, for example. Because of this, I also recommend padded fabric headphones that wrap around your head like a headband. The only negative aspect of the fabric headphones is that users complain that the headband can get hot. That's why I appreciate the CozyPhones Sleep Headphones with a Cool Mesh Lining.

If you're feeling whimsical CozyPhones also makes a kids' version that comes cute designs like unicorns, bunnies, panda bears, smile emojis and dinosaurs.

Sleep Hack 30

Use a 5-Minute Journal

I recently purchased the 5-Minute Journal and have given one to every person I care about. I didn't specifically buy it to improve my sleep, but I found it to be one of the most tools in my sleep arsenal.

The 5-Minute Journal is used by thousands of successful people as a way to adjust their mindset and focus on daily gratitude exercises. It literally takes only five minutes a day and goes something like this:

- Twice a day you write in the journal. Immediately upon rising, and again right before bed.
- In the morning, you write down three things you're grateful for, three things that would make today great, and a confidence-boosting affirmation.
- In the evening, you write down three amazing things that happened during your day and a statement about how you could have made the day better.

The reason this works so well as a sleep hack is that it helps you jumpstart your day on a positive note and keeps you energized toward the goal of making each day great. And when you go to bed, you review your day and focus on what went well.

You also have a chance to reflect on what you did each day and what you could have improved. Instead of stewing over conflict and obstacles, you take a proactive and positive approach. By the time your head hits the pillow, your mind is clear and the stress of the day is wiped away.

Sleep Hack 31

Use Bright Light Therapy

Bright light therapy is a common treatment for SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder), which tends to affect people in the winter, but it's an effective sleep hacking tool that you can use year round.

Here's why it works: we require sunlight to stabilize our circadian rhythm, but extensive use of artificial light along with long winter nights can throw us off track. This also affects our energy and sleep. A therapeutic light box simulates sunlight by producing a wide spectrum of light, much more so than artificial light.

To get the most out of therapeutic light boxes, use them for 30 minutes to an hour in the morning at your desk. The exposure to this natural light will balance your circadian rhythm, which will boost your energy during the day, benefit your mood and ultimately, increase the quality of your sleep.

Light boxes are also particularly valuable in the winter and on cloudy days. If you're not getting enough sunlight in your daily routine, try the Sun Box therapeutic light box for more energy, an improvement in your alertness and an overall better outlook on life.

Sleep Hack 32

Use a bright light alarm

If the repetitive sounds of a buzzer or the blasting of frenetic music tunes are not your preferred wake-up methods, I recommend a bright light alarm. Just like the name suggests, this is an alarm that wakes you up with light rather than sound. It mimics the way the sun rises, but if you're getting up before sunrise (or at another dark time), you might benefit from the bright light alarm. The light gradually increases in intensity until you're in a brightly lit room.

Sleep Hack 33

Use meditation apps

Years ago, I used to scour YouTube looking for guided meditations to help me sleep. Now, it seems, there's an app for everything, and there are numerous choices for meditation apps.

My favorite, at the moment, is an app called Calm. There's a free version and a paid version. This app has something for everyone, from the beginner to seasoned practitioners. Sessions range from three to 25 minutes, so whether you want something brief or would rather go deeper, there are options to fit your schedule.

Another valuable feature of this app is that they divide the meditations into different themes. This is helpful because you can choose a meditation that's specifically designed for sleeping or work on another aspect of your life while also getting the benefit of drowsiness. Current topics include:

- Deep sleep
- Calming anxiety
- Managing stress
- Focus and concentration
- Relationships
- Breaking habits
- Happiness
- Gratitude
- Self-esteem

- Body scan
- Loving and kindness
- Forgiveness
- Non-judgment
- Walking meditations
- Meditations for kids

Part 7

Sleep and Lifestyle Habits

THE **Sleep** Advisor

Sleep Hack 34

Quit Smoking

The nicotine in cigarettes is a stimulant, which will keep you awake. If you smoke close to bedtime, it will most definitely affect your ability to sleep. Smokers are also more prone to sleep apnea and getting up in the middle of the night.

Nonsmokers experience deeper and more restorative sleep than non-smokers, so if you've got this habit and need better sleep, consider dropping it.

Sleep Hack 35

Avoid stress in the evening

Stress, in general, will negatively affect your sleep. After all, it's difficult to relax and shut out the world if you're constantly worrying about your day or what's going on in your life. If you're feeling stressed in the evening, that's even worse because it will prevent you from winding down sufficiently at the end of the day.

A small amount of stress can indeed be helpful in keeping us alert and energetic, but too much of it makes us anxious and can lead to insomnia.

If you've had a stressful day at work, try to do something in the evening to take your mind off of it. Enjoying a hobby, spending time with loved ones, and taking your pet for a walk are just a few ideas. Think about what triggers your stress responses and make an effort to avoid them. If you're the type to check your email before bed, take a break from that habit and see if it makes a difference.

Another evening stress trigger is thinking about what we need to do the next day. They can be mundane worries like what we're going to wear to work, to more serious ones like an upcoming presentation we're nervous about or a meeting we're going to have that we don't anticipate going well. Depending on the source of your stress, I recommend taking steps before bed to eliminate or minimize these stresses. Plan your day as best you can the night before, write down what you hope to accomplish the next day and utilize the 5-Minute Journal from Sleep Hack 30 to help you finish the day and prepare for the next one.
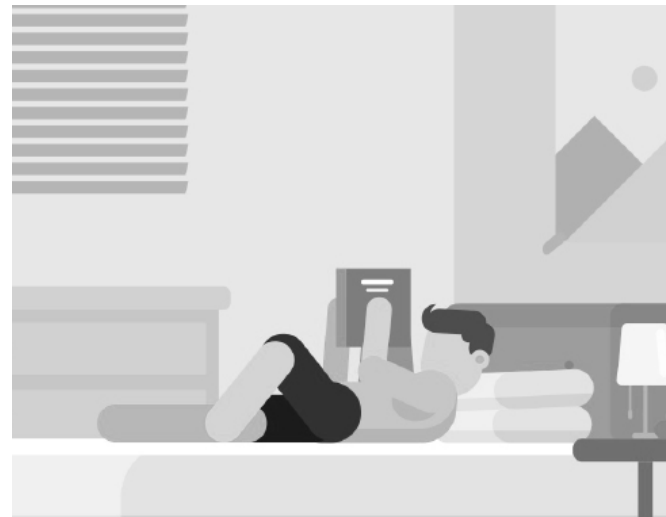
Sleep Hack 36

Avoid reading right before bed

This might surprise you because a lot of people use reading to fall asleep at night. Many sleep experts have said that if it's time for bed and you're not tired to climb into bed with a book, especially a boring one, and you'll be lights out in no time. And if you decide to pick an exciting or stimulating book to read, you might find that you say to yourself, "just one more chapter!" and before you know it an hour or more has passed that you should have spent asleep.

However, reading before bed is actually a bad idea. It causes you to be in bright, artificial light, right before sleeping. This delays your melatonin production and can affect how well and deeply you rest once you're asleep.

Another reason that it's bad to read right before bed is that it untrains your mind about what your bed is for. I recommend using your bed for sleep and sex only. Over time your body will cue your mind that it's time for sleep when you go to bed. If you read, eat, watch television or work while you're in bed you've confused your body and it's less likely to be ready for sleep when you lie down.

THE **Sleep Advisor**

Sleep Hack 37

Avoid movies and intense TV shows before bed

Just like reading, watching television before bed emits artificial light that will affect your natural circadian rhythm. Further, the blue light from the television is known to delay REM sleep, so even if you doze off during your favorite shows, your sleep will still be less than optimal.

Another issue is that the availability of on-demand, streaming television and movies has made almost everything watchable at the touch of a fingertip. It's easy to get sucked in to a binge watching session and then have to wake up in 3 hours to go to work. And with movies, you're delaying your sleep by approximately two hours. If you do enjoy watching television and movies and night, plan your evening so it's not right before bed.

In terms of intense TV shows, horror movies and action-packed dramas, there's no official correlation between watching those and having nightmares, but it is known that watching these images on your screen can cause stress, and stress affects our sleep.

I've made the mistake of watching The Walking Dead before bed and it is has definitely affected the time it took for me to fall asleep as well as how well I slept that night. Two other movies I've made the mistake of watching before bed were Tusk and Get Out. Think about the last intense movie or show you watched before bed, or better yet, check your sleep log (Sleep Hack 4) to see how you've been affected by watching television before going to sleep.

Sleep Hack 38

Exercise regularly and early in the morning

Exercising regularly has tremendous health benefits, and improving our daily sleep is just one of those. People who engage in exercise 3 to 4 times per week have better cardiovascular health, lower heart rates, and regular blood pressure. Exercise also helps release stress, take our mind off our troubles and get out off the couch, all key factors that help us sleep.

It's important to note that exercise does increase the amount of cortisol in our blood, but it's a temporary spike that decreases hours after activity. This is why it's important to exercise early in the day, preferably morning, lunchtime or early in the afternoon to avoid having too much cortisol in our system at night.

Sleep Hack 39

Do not exercise at least two hours before bed

This sleep hack ties into Hack 38. Again, exercising too close to bedtime doesn't allow for your body to rid itself of the cortisol spike it experienced during exercise. Again, schedule your exercise activities for morning or early afternoon. If you prefer to exercise after work, make sure it's at least two hours before bed.

Another reason this is important is that our bodies should be refueled with food after exercise. If we exercise too close to bedtime, it goes to reason that we would also eat too close to when it's time for bed. And yes, you can technically skip a meal after exercise, but you then run the risk of having your sleep disrupted by waking up hungry in the middle of the night.

THE **Sleep Advisor**

Sleep Hack 40

Meditate before going to bed

Meditation is helpful for clearing your mind of the stress of your day and preparing it for sleep. It can be tempting to meditate in bed, but again, remember that your bed is for sleeping and sex only (Sleep Hack 36).

My recommendation is to find a place where you can sit comfortably for between 15 minutes to an hour. It may be a chair in a quiet room in your house or on the floor. You can use a meditation app or find guided meditations at no cost on YouTube. Another option is to listen to relaxing music, or nothing at all.

Do whatever feels comfortable for you as long as you are able to clear your mind and stop thinking. Since this is easier said than done, if you're a beginner try a meditation app like Calm.

Sleep Hack 41

Avoid snoozing your alarm

This is a tough one, and most of us are guilty of it. Whether you snooze your alarm for one 9-minute cycle or an hour or more, you're not doing yourself any favors and you're not getting any more sleep. In fact, you're likely to wake up more tired than if you didn't snooze at all.

In essence, each time the alarm goes off, the body thinks it's time to get up. But then each time you press snooze, you've signaled that it's a false alarm, and your body has no idea what to expect. When the buzzer goes off each time, you feel groggier. So, again you're not helping the situation or your sleep.

If you're a habitual snoozer, you can do the tried and true technique of putting your alarm clock or smartphone on the other side of the room, which forces you to get up and turn off the alarm.
The obvious problem with this approach is that there's nothing stopping you from walking back over to your bed and climbing right back in. That's what I can sometimes be guilty of even though I know better.

If that sounds like you, I have something else you can try instead that I've had tremendous success with. Basically, you have to retrain your body not to press snooze. It's going to take practice, but it's easy, and once you get the hang of it, it will change your life.

THE **Sleep Advisor**

You are going to practice waking up, but you'll do it in the middle of the day when you're not tired. Here's what to do:

1. Lie down in the afternoon and set an alarm for 5 minutes.
2. Don't go to sleep! Just lie in bed and relax.
3. When the alarm goes off, get up and resume your day.
4. Do not press snooze; do not go back to bed.

Practice this a few times a day (spread apart of course), or once a day as often as you can. Once you've done it a few dozen times, you'll be a pro with a brand new healthy habit.

By far this technique has been the most helpful for me in getting out of bed without wasting hours a week pressing snooze.

Part 8

Psychology

Sleep Hack 42

Use your internal alarm clock

We've all experienced a time when we had to wake up early for something important. Maybe it was to catch a flight, take an exam or be at a job interview. If you sleep through your alarm clock, you're in big trouble. So what do you do? You set alarms all over your house, maybe even schedule one of those fancy wake up call services.

And then what happens? You wake up five minutes before any of your alarms are set to go off. How did you do that?

It turns out that our bodies actually have built-in internal alarm clocks that respond to the stress hormones of ACTH and cortisol. We're so stressed that our brain signals the pituitary and adrenal glands to spike ACTH and cortisol to wake us up when it's time.[*]

As you can imagine, this is not an ideal or sustainable way to live out our days. However, you can use this technique to your advantage and maybe even throw away your alarm clock. You do this by psychologically prepping yourself before bed. Visualize the time you want to wake up, see the time on your clock or smartphone, picture yourself getting up energized and on time. You can even set a morning reward to help make this more of a reality (Sleep Hack 44).

---

* Sources:
https://www.wiley.com/college/psyc/huffman249327/resources/news/articles/alarm4.html

THE **Sleep** Advisor

There's another type of internal alarm clock you can use that's a bit different. It's relying on your own body's circadian rhythm to wake itself up when it's ready and go to sleep when it's tired. I tried this technique while I was on a long vacation, and this is by far my favorite way to sleep. It's not for everyone, but with a little bit of practice, it can be.

This practice is called free-running sleep and it works like this:
1. Go to sleep when you're tired
2. Wake up on your own without an alarm

Before alarm clocks were invented, this is pretty much how we slept as humans. We were cued by our internal alarm clocks that follow circadian rhythms to wake us up as it starts getting light. And then, as night sets in, our internal alarm clocks tell us that it's time to rest.

This is by far the best way to ensure that you're getting enough sleep, and you go to bed and wake up on your schedule and on your own terms.

The only challenge with this approach is if you have an annoying boss that expects you to be somewhere at a certain time, and your internal alarm clock is not on that schedule. However, it can be worth trying when you're on vacation to see if it's something you can realistically maintain.

Sleep Hack 43

Write down a to-do list for tomorrow

If you're a busy person (who isn't, right?), you know you have a million things to do tomorrow. Do you ever lie awake in bed at night and run through your task list for tomorrow? Or worse, do you even try to block out all the tasks into time increments, and you end up scheduling your day in your head? Do you worry that you're going to forget to do something?

All of those things will keep you awake at night, and perhaps worse is that they'll be the first things you think of when you wake up. When that happens, it can be hard to get out of bed because you're thinking of your endless to-do list, and frankly nothing on it sounds terribly fun.

All of those things will keep you awake at night, and perhaps worse is that they'll be the first things you think of when you wake up. When that happens, it can be hard to get out of bed because you're thinking of your endless to-do list, and frankly nothing on it sounds terribly fun.

The solution to this is simple: write down your to-do list for tomorrow the night before. Once it's on paper, it's out of your head and you can rest easily knowing that everything for the next day is planned out. You can use a simple notebook, calendar or piece of paper to plan out your list, or you can try a tool like Brendon Burchard's 1-Page Productivity Planner that will even help you plan out your tasks step by step and cue you to list resources and people you need to make your day a success.

Sleep Hack 44

Set a morning reward

This hack is one of my favorites because it's the most fun.

You can implement this hack by picking a reward to give yourself when you stick to your daily sleep plan. Each morning when you get up without pressing snooze, for example, you can give yourself a reward. Maybe it's something simple like taking five extra minutes in the shower or having your favorite treat for breakfast. For me, it's treating myself to a cup of coffee at my favorite coffee shop on the way to work. If you have a partner, you can try adding morning sex to your routine as a reward. It'll definitely be the most fun part of waking up each morning!

This hack can also be applied as a longer-term reward system. For example, you can give yourself a reward for reaching a goal. Whether it's to go to bed by a certain time, wake up without snoozing or resisting the urge to watch television right before bed, pick a goal, pick a time period you're going to measure (one week, one month, etc.) and if you stick to your plan reward yourself. Maybe a new pair of shoes, a spa treatment or a couple of hours of "you" time, pick something meaningful and work toward it.

THE **Sleep Advisor**

If you're feeling extra ambitious, you can even set a consequence for missing your daily goal. For example, if you press snooze, maybe you have to buy a coworker a coffee. Not so fun for you, but you may just become the most popular person at the office!

Sleep Hack 45

Focus on small wins in the morning

Exercising regularly has tremendous health benefits, and improving our daily sleep is just one of those. People who engage in exercise 3 to 4 times per week have better cardiovascular health, lower heart rates, and regular blood pressure. Exercise also helps release stress, take our mind off our troubles and get out off the couch, all key factors that help us sleep.

First thing in the morning is when we tend to have the least amount of willpower. And when we're groggy and just waking up, our cognitive abilities are at their lowest. It's important to set the tone for our day by focusing on small wins that will boost our mood and make us happier, healthier individuals who sleep like champions.

Whether the small win is noticing that your shirt is already ironed, the sunrise is particularly beautiful or you had all green lights on the way to work in the morning, acknowledge each one and express your gratitude. It will go a long way in helping you sleep and feel happy in general.

Sleep Hack 46

Maintain a positive attitude toward other people and life

The power of positivity is key in elevating our moods and overall levels of happiness. When we're in a better mood, we naturally sleep better and even need less sleep.

Think about what happens when someone cuts you off on the freeway. Do you get mad, curse their driving, and consider rushing ahead to cut them off? Or, do you think to yourself, "they must be in a big hurry. I hope they get where they're going in time."

Or maybe you've been interviewing for jobs and you didn't get an offer for a position you desperately wanted. You were certainly the most qualified. Instead of focusing on the fact that you didn't get the job, try to turn around your thinking and instead realize that the company did you a favor by not hiring you because there's something better out there.

"
THINK
POSITIVE
BE POSITIVE
"

It takes practice to find the positive in every aspect of your life, but I can assure you, there is always a positive. By focusing on the positive rather than the negative, you can lead a life that is much more fulfilling that leads to better sleep, too!

Sleep Hack 47

Listen to euphoric music in the morning

Waking up to buzzing alarms and talk radio isn't the most pleasant way to start the day. Rather, music can be the most uplifting and a fantastic soundtrack for your morning wakeup routine.

I'd caution that you don't want just any music for waking up. Jarring or loud tunes can startle you. Instead, Dr. Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic recommends euphoric music upon rising to help you feel alert and positive instead of disoriented and groggy.

Further, Chamorro-Premuzic derived a formula to predict how much serotonin your brain produces in reaction to the music you hear. It looks like this:

Serotonin levels = Pitch + % of positive lyrics + Tonality + Beats per minute + Images/Memories associated with the music.[*]

As you can see, even though there are constants that are universal to all humans, the last variable is individual and is affected by our own images and memories. Find a song to wake up to that is positive and sparks positive associations and images and you'll feel on top of the world.

---

* Sources:
https://www.theguardian.com/culture/culturevultureblog/2005/sep/16/drfeelgoodsfa1

THE **Sleep Advisor**

Sleep Hack 48

Get some sunlight in the morning

The single best way to set and calibrate your body's internal clock is to expose yourself to sunlight in the morning. The bright, natural light signals your body that it's daytime. This, in turn, stops your body from producing melatonin while setting it up to produce it again at night.

Another reason to soak up some sun in the morning is that it helps combat depression, especially in the winter when there are fewer daylight hours to experience sunshine. If you find that you absolutely can't get natural sunlight in the morning, whether it's due to the time you wake up or your location, try using a therapeutic light box as a substitute in your home or office.

Conclusion

Whether you try just one of these Sleep Hacks or dozens, you're bound to find that your sleep improves. Some of these are instant fixes, and some require you to train your body and develop healthier habits.

Making a lifestyle change can be difficult. Just know that you are not alone. With 50-70 million US adults suffering from some type of sleep disorder, it's important to take a proactive approach and improve your sleep. It's a crucial component of your overall health, and the better you sleep, the healthier you'll be.