

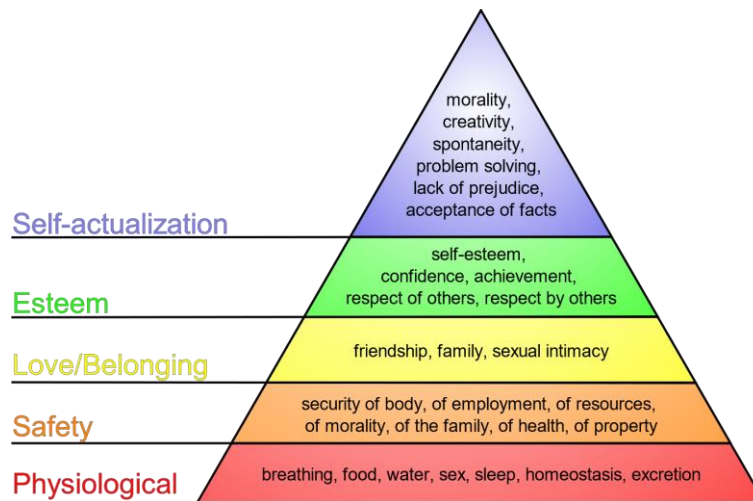


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C O U N S E L L I N G

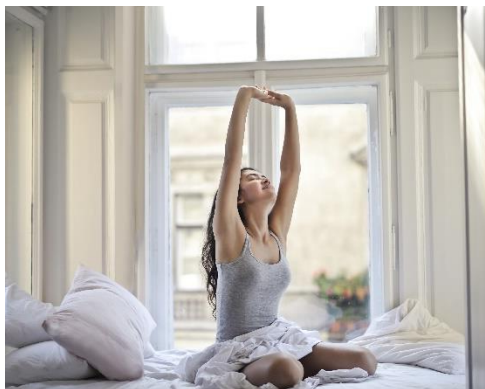
Sleep and sleep hygiene

It is universally understood we need a decent amount of sleep. As Maslow's hierarchy of needs reminds us, sleep is a basic need. It is restorative and supports good mental and physical health. Yet around one in three adults experience sleep difficulties; trouble getting to sleep and/or night waking.



Have you heard of sleep hygiene? This refers to healthy sleep habits practised both during the day and before you go to bed. It enables you to go to sleep, stay asleep and feel refreshed.

6 steps to good sleep hygiene



Much like any other change in behaviour, sleep hygiene requires a consistent and persistent approach. By repeating daily, you will form habits which support good quality sleep.

1. Get up at the same time every day, even at weekends

There is no need to be too rigid but rising at around the same time every day encourages the body to get into a consistent routine of sleep.

2. Dose yourself up with daylight

Aim to get outside every day for 30-60 minutes in the morning or lunchtime. This is because sunlight underpins our circadian rhythms.

3. Be physically active

Regular exercise is beneficial for so many reasons, including making it easier to sleep.

4. Cut down on caffeine in the afternoon and evenings

Caffeine is a stimulant, and it is best to ensure we only consume it in the morning. And about stimulants, nicotine can disrupt sleep, so smoking is best avoided.

5. Reduce alcohol consumption

People often reach for the bottle when they are having difficulty sleeping. Whilst it can help people fall asleep, it contributes to night waking which can perpetuate the problem.

6. Say goodnight to electronic devices

Electronic devices play an integral role in our waking lives but when it comes to sleep, they should be avoided. They generate blue light which decreased melatonin (sleep hormone) production and cause mental stimulation.

Instead give yourself 30-60 minutes of device free time before going to bed.

Other tips for success



1. Do not toss and turn in bed

You want to strengthen the association of your bed and sleeping. So, if you are still awake after 20 minutes, get up. Instead do some relaxation techniques, read, or engage with another calming activity in low light for up to 30 minutes. Then try to go to sleep again.

2. Only go to bed when you are sleepy

You may find yourself going to bed because there is nothing good on TV or you are bored. The sensation of feeling sleepy is your bodies cue to go to sleep. So, you don't feel sleepy, stay up until you feel ready for bed.

3. Limit your activity in bed

Ensure your bed is only used for sleep and sex. All other activities should be done elsewhere.

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