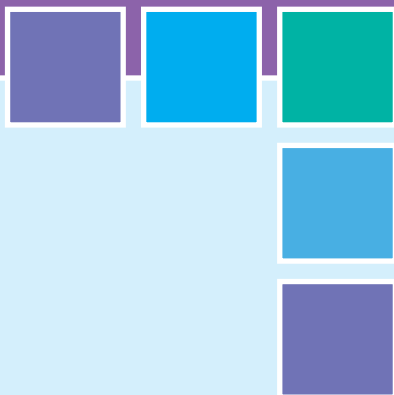




# An Easy Guide to a Blissful Night's Sleep



**As a Stress Counsellor, one of the most common challenges I come across is clients who regularly experience interrupted sleep patterns. Not only is this frustrating, it also adversely affects your immune system and ability to perform and enjoy life to the best of your ability.**

**Of course, there are reasons why sleep is interrupted if you have small children or if you are in pain but even in the latter case, you may find some of the following advice helpful.**

**Some people may find that one or two of these tips work better for them than others and that's fine. It's about what works for you. What is important to know is that these are all valid, proven techniques that have helped many of my clients to enjoy regular, restful, peaceful nights of refreshing, re-energising sleep – even after long-term issues with this!**



1. First of all, it is important to recognise that the bedroom and your bed are for sleep (and sex of course, but we're not dealing with this in this article!). If you have regularly interrupted sleep, try and avoid watching TV or reading in bed, so that you mentally associate bed with sleep and rest.
2. On the subject of TV, it is recommended that you spend some time between watching TV and going to bed doing something else. The action of TV on the brain is often to excite it and make it active. Going to bed immediately after switching off the TV therefore, means you are not sending your brain the message that it's sleep time. Try perhaps reading a book, taking a bath, meditating or listening to some soothing music to try and slow things down a bit and get into the right mindset for a good night's sleep.
3. Because caffeine and alcohol are stimulants and also stressors to the digestive system, it is not recommended that you drink these before you go to bed. Choose instead a milky drink. The calcium content in milk, which helps relaxation, combined with tryptophan, which the body converts into serotonin, makes you sleepy.





4. If possible, eat your main meal at lunchtime and eat lightly in the evening. Not only does this mean you have many more hours of activity to burn off the calories of a large meal at lunchtime, it also means you are not going to bed with an overloaded and overactive digestive system which could reduce your chances of a restful sleep.
5. I regularly come across clients who go to sleep easily enough, but then find themselves waking with a mind in turmoil in the early hours and can't get back to sleep. This is doubly difficult as, after a while, you're not only worrying about all the things you might forget to do, have forgotten to do or might face tomorrow, but you also then start to worry that you will feel tired because you have had little or no sleep – a true nightmare scenario! There are several ways of dealing with this situation and here are some of them:

Always keep a notepad and pen or pencil by the side of the bed. If you wake up worrying about things, download them by writing them down and then forget about them. The very act of writing them down is often enough to do the trick!

If your mind is still whirling, you can try a distraction technique. First of all actively tell your mind to stop! Then start to concentrate on your breathing. Breathe deeply into the abdomen by pushing the abdomen out as you breathe in, thus expanding the chest cavity to take in more oxygen and then breathe out, drawing the abdomen in. Do this several times and notice how this action reduces any knots in your tummy or diaphragm and how the

action of breathing out starts to relax other muscles around the body. Then allow yourself just to breathe deeply but normally concentrating on how the breath sounds and feels as you breathe in and how it sounds and feels as you breathe out. Notice the differences and feel every muscle start to soften and loosen each time you breathe out. Notice the temperature of your breath and the rhythm and so on. You can even visualise or daydream as you breathe, thinking of floating on clouds or on an airbed or boat – whatever is relaxing and pleasant. You'll soon find yourself drifting into a restful and pleasant sleep. If your mind starts to drift and you find yourself back churning over thoughts, don't worry – just go back to wherever you are with this relaxation technique.

Another technique you can try in this instance is to get up for a little while – maybe 5 minutes to half an hour. Go to the loo, read a book or mag, make a warm drink or potter around a little. Then go back to bed. You'll probably find that, because you have broken the chain of thought, you relax and easily drift off to sleep.

Another very effective technique is to start with the breathing technique as described above and then to concentrate on each part of the body in turn, starting with the feet and working up to the top of the head. Each time you breathe out, concentrate on that body part and feel all tension dissipating and melting away. Notice the muscles relaxing and releasing every time you breathe out and let everything go limp. Slowly and carefully work your way up through the feet and ankles, the shins and calves, the thighs, the

buttocks, abdomen, hips and waist etc. Often you'll be in a deep sleep long before you get to the head. If however, you're still awake when you reach the head, don't forget also to relax the muscles of the neck and face, taking in the eyes, ears, nose, mouth, jaw and tongue.

6. If you find baths relaxing, try taking one before you go to bed. Really pamper yourself and add a few drops of good quality, relaxing essential oils such as lavender, chamomile or bergamot. Light some candles and put on some mood enhancing, soothing music.
7. Talking of essential oils, you can use oils such as Lavender, Chamomile, Neroli, Rose, Marjoram, and Jasmine for their relaxant properties. They are very powerful, so only a few drops are needed and please note not to apply these direct to your skin. Dilute a few drops in almond oil and apply to wrists, behind the ears and on the temples or put a few drops in water and use them in a burner in the bedroom, but well away from the bed (to avoid accidents). You can also put a few drops of oil on your pillow or on a tissue (which avoids staining) just by your pillow. Buy good quality essential oils that are not already diluted or buy a blend from a reputable, high quality source.

8. You can also use music to relax you when you go to bed if you find this helps. Choose something like ambient music (whale sounds, sounds of the waves with backing music etc) or anything else you find soothing and relaxing. Avoid anything too loud or too lively. You can either set your timer so that the machine switches itself off when the music finishes or leave the system on all night (you won't notice anyway if you're fast asleep!).
9. There are various CDs on the market, which talk you through relaxations, hypnotherapy and visualisations which can help you sleep. If you fall asleep in the middle of them, it doesn't matter at all. In fact, it will have had the desired effect.
10. According to research studies, regular daily exercise promotes deeper more restorative sleep. Exercise three times a week for around 20 minutes is recommended. Even light exercise such as a daily walk can be very beneficial. However, make sure not to exercise immediately before bedtime as it takes time to wind down. In addition, regular exercise raises the heart rate keeping it healthy, aids the digestive system and is an investment in your future health.





If you have any queries, ideas, points of view or want further information on any service, please contact Annie Lawler on 0772 581 8884 or [annie@breathingspacetherapies.co.uk](mailto:annie@breathingspacetherapies.co.uk).

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# Sleep well!

## More Information About Breathing Space Therapies

Breathing Space Therapies is owned by Annie Lawler. I am a qualified stress management expert, hypnotherapist, Reiki and massage therapist.

Having worked in competitive business environments for over 20 years, I established my company, Breathing Space Therapies. Through a mixture of one-to-one coaching and counselling sessions, seminars and workshops, I am able to help people make positive changes in their lives so that they can perform better and enjoy every aspect of their lives more fully.

My sister company, Breathing Space for Business helps organisations improve staff retention, reduce absenteeism, improve performance and avoid expensive litigation relating to stress.

[www.breathingspacetherapies.co.uk](http://www.breathingspacetherapies.co.uk)