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**‘A Good Night’s Sleep’**

Adults

We can all have difficulty sleeping for a variety of reasons, and autistic people, and those with other neurodevelopmental conditions, can often experience difficulties sleeping more frequently. **Please see the following 10 tips which could help you get a good night’s sleep:**

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| 1. **Daily Structure- What time do you wake in the morning and go to bed at night?**   Try and establish a clear structure to your day, waking up and going to bed at roughly the same time each day will help you bring structure to each day. You may also find it useful to know your schedule for each day. However, if occasionally you have to get up earlier or go to bed later, don’t worry. Sometimes we have to make changes, if we are going out for the day or attending a special event like a wedding. What is important is that you follow your routine most of the time.   1. **Food and Drink- What do you eat and drink throughout the day?**   Having a balanced diet throughout the day, with the lightest meal nearer to bedtime, is advisable. If you need a caffeinated drink, try and limit caffeine to earlier on in the day, morning is an ideal time. Drinking alcohol before bed may disturb your sleep, you may fall asleep but wake during the night. It is not advisable to use alcohol to ‘help you get to sleep’ as this may become an unhelpful habit and make it harder for you to get a good night’s sleep each night.   1. **Rhythm of the Day- Do you move around during the day? Are you doing enough to get physically tired?**   Moving around during the day and some form of exercise will help you feel tired at night. Any form of physical movement will help, such as digging in the garden, housework, a walk in the park, a bike ride, yoga, or a jog. If you find it difficult to leave the house, walk up and down the stairs, dancing around the house to your favourite music, or try an online class.   1. **Relax and Unwind- What helps you relax?**   We all need to relax before bed. Maybe you could take a warm bath, read a book, listen to calming music, or read your favourite blog to help you relax. If you have had a particularly difficult day, it may take you longer to relax and unwind. Try and take some extra time to relax before attempting to go to sleep. Some people find activities like yoga or meditation helps them to relax.   1. **Bedroom Detective- Is your bedroom an easy space to fall asleep and stay asleep in?**   Is there light creeping in under the door or ‘standby lights’ on equipment visible? Black out blinds are great for blocking out external light. If you can tolerate one, an eye mask is a good way of blocking out all light. Consider the amount of ‘stuff’ in your room. Do you need to declutter? If you can, clear away clothes, books, or any other mess, before you try and relax. Your bedroom should be a place of relaxation and sleep. Are your bed and pillows comfortable? Do you get cold during the night? You need to be comfortable and warm enough during the night or you will keep waking up. The ideal temperature for most people is 16c-18c. Are there any strong smells that may keep you alert and awake, air fresheners, perfumes?   1. **Rename It, Renown It- Is anxiety hindering your sleep?**   It is an anxious time for us all, there is a lot of unsettling and anxiety provoking stories and news items on television and social media. If you’re feeling anxious try doing things to reduce your anxiety. What will work for you? You may need to limit the amount you watch the news and access social media. Writing down worries or concerns during the day may help avoid negative thoughts at bedtime. Identify something that pleased you today. Think of something positive you will do tomorrow, always try and finish the day on a positive note.   1. **General Health- Do you have any underlying health conditions? Are you in good health?**   Your physical and emotional health will impact your sleep. If you have concerns, you may need to seek medical advice (GP), or specialist advice. Some medications may also affect your sleep. Always check if you are taking medication, some cold and flu remedies have caffeine added.   1. **Wise use of Technology- Use technology to help you get to sleep rather than keep you awake.**   Try and switch screens off an hour before bed. Sometimes this may not be possible (listening to music, meditation, calming/ sleep apps require a screen). Use timer switches and switch to night-time settings on any devices.   1. **Dear Diary- Do you have any thoughts and worries keeping you awake?**   Make a list of the things you think are keeping you awake at night. You can write them in a sleep diary. You can also make a note of what you eat and drink, what time you woke up and went to bed. Did you have a busy day, did you move/ take part in any exercise, are you excited or looking forward to something? Did something happen that upset you? Was there something that you did that made you happy? Keeping a diary may help you identify some helpful strategies or solutions.  **10. A Daily Treat- Plan one nice thing for yourself every day.**  Now more than ever, we need to be kind to ourselves. Build in a daily treat to your routine, such as taking a relaxing bath, watching your favourite film, reading a book, or eating a bar of chocolate. We all need a treat sometimes and to look after ourselves. |

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| **Resources & Website Links**  There are lots of resources and videos already available that may help you to sleep, please see below:  Calming Mindfulness Mediation Meditation before Sleeping  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DFEnruF-dts&feature=youtu.be>  Yoga and Mindfulness  https://www.asdinfowales.co.uk/news/yoga-mindfulness-and-autism  Sleep Diary  <https://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/insomnia/Documents/sleepdiary.pdf>  <https://www.tiredout.org.uk/sleepdiary/the-childrens-sleep-charity>  Useful websites  <https://www.autism.org.uk/about/health/sleep.aspx>  <https://www.sleep.org/>  <https://www.lilaslab.com/>  <https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/nih-offers-new-comprehensive-guide-healthy-sleep>  If you require additional support, you may need to contact your GP or Integrated Autism Service:  <https://www.asdinfowales.co.uk/en/integrated-autism-service-2> |

**Anne Marie McKigney**

**(Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychologist ABUHB)**