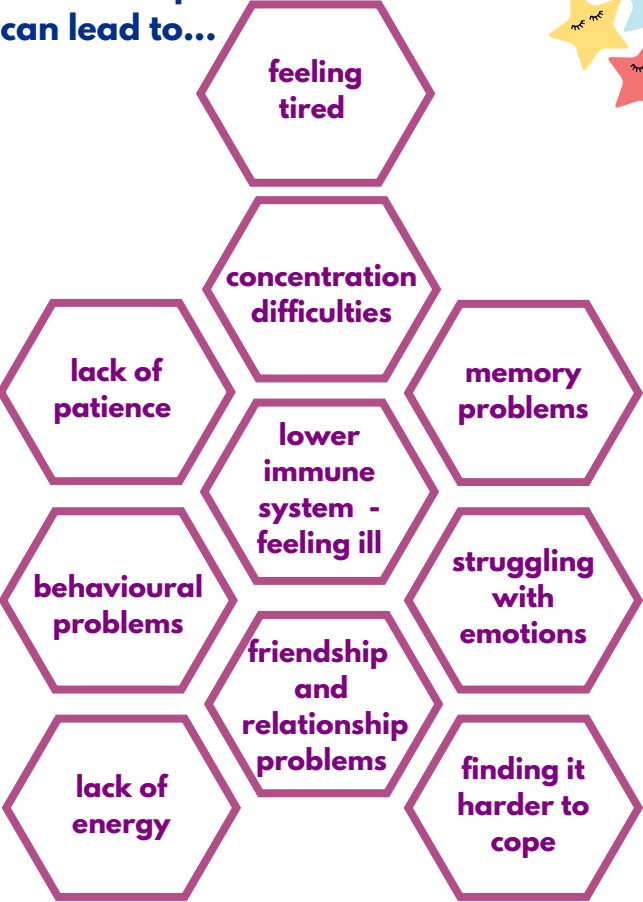


Sleep is so important! Getting good sleep is one of the easiest ways to look after ourselves both physically and mentally.

Poor sleep can lead to...



Much is now known about sleep science and this has been used to create some top tips for how to get better sleep.

HOW CAN I HELP?

Look after yourself:

Sleep is important for us all. When we sleep well we can notice a real difference.

Look at the top tips (overleaf) and try and introduce some of them into your own sleep routine, to improve your sleep.

Home tasks:

In session this week, we discussed sleep routines which included some of the top tips. A new routine can be tricky to follow at first. Share the ideas with someone at home, so they can support you make the changes.

Don't get disheartened if it doesn't go well to begin with or if you don't see instant results. Keep going!

SLEEP TOP TIPS

NAME



Routine



A regular bedtime helps our circadian rhythms to settle so we feel sleepy at the same time every night.

We also need to have the same routine the other side of sleep too - a regular waking up time. Routines need to be repeated a number of times for it to be effective.

Environment



Being calm and comfortable is important for sleep.

A perfectly tidy room isn't essential, but lots of clutter can cause stress and act as a reminder of things that need doing. Small steps like putting clothes away, and making sure rubbish finds the bin will help.

If our bedroom is also our study and social space, we need to find ways to keep our bed just for sleeping. If the bed is the only place to sit - try sitting on the end, not at the head, and don't get under the covers until it's sleep time. This helps our brain to understand that getting into bed means it's time to sleep.

Light and noise



Complete silence doesn't work for everyone, but keep any noise low and calming - like relaxing music or sounds.

Keep light, which reduces melatonin production, away with blackout blinds. If some light is needed, use a soft night light.

Conditions need to be the same throughout the night, so that when we naturally move in and out of lighter sleep, we drop back off again. This means any light or sound we have to fall asleep with, will have to stay on all night.

Screen time



Melatonin makes us sleepy and blue light from screens tells our brain to stop making it. Also, the content is usually stimulating, which makes our brain active.

No screens for at least an hour before bed can help. And try not to be tempted to reach for phones in the middle of the night.

Food



Not getting enough food can make us wake in the night. But eating too close to bedtime may affect our sleep as the body doesn't have time to complete digestion. We may wake with indigestion or stomach ache.

Not all food is bad before bed though. A small snack of cereal, milk, bananas or cheese can help as these 'sleepy foods' contain a chemical that helps melatonin production.

Caffeine can stop us getting to sleep and can affect the quality of sleep. Be aware that it's also in some drinks we may not have thought of such as tea or hot chocolate.

Calm mind



When our mind is busy or stressing, it can stop our brain from shutting down and feeling sleepy.

Spending time during the day to take care of ourselves is important and building some self-care into our bedtime routine can help. Try a calming activity such as reading, having a bath, listening to calming music, skincare etc.

If your mind won't shut down at bedtime, a journal can help - making a note of thoughts, worries or simply what's happened that day. It could be a beautifully displayed, expertly written diary, or it could just be some notes, scribbles or drawings.

Breathing, mindfulness and relaxation techniques can help too.

Exercise



Exercise is great for sleep! It uses excess energy and releases stress and tension.

However, exercise straight before bed can have the opposite effect as exercise releases endorphins and adrenaline - feel good hormones - which can excite rather than relax us.

So exercise is best during the day, not in the 2-3 hours before bed.

