



Building Resilience

# Sleep & relaxation



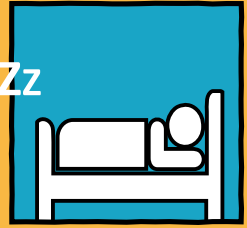
Mental Health  
Foundation

CITY  
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TRUST



**What is sleep?**  
**Why do we do it?**

Zzzzz



Use the space below to write down your ideas.



A large, light blue rectangular area with a black outline, intended for writing down ideas.

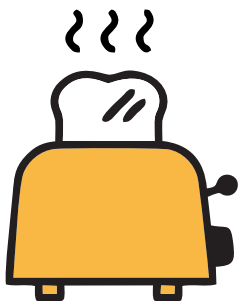


The Oxford Dictionary defines sleep as:



# The resting state in which the body is not active and the mind is unconscious

For many of us, our understanding of sleep seems to be based on what we think it does for us. It's widely believed that sleep gives the body a chance to recuperate, but in reality the amount of energy saved by sleeping is tiny.



In fact, sleeping for eight hours gives you the same amount of energy as eating a slice of toast.

No one is really sure why we sleep. Scientists have been baffled for centuries.

# What happens if we don't get enough sleep?

Write your thoughts here.



Continued lack of sleep can affect many areas of our lives. For example, our interactions with people, professionals and services can be difficult, avoided and damaged. Affects like these can cause further stress, anxiety and even more problems sleeping and relaxing.

After one night of disturbed or lack of sleep, concentration becomes difficult and our attention span gets smaller. With continued lack of sleep, the part of our brain that controls memory, planning and our sense of time is severely affected and starts to shut down.

**Research has shown that lack of sleep has been a contributing factor in a number of international disasters and accidents.**



The nuclear disaster at Chernobyl was one of the worst in history. The power plant exploded during a routine test by engineers who had been working for 13 hours or more. Investigators ruled that sleep deprivation was part of what led to the explosion. The actual number of deaths caused by the accident is unknown, but there were 240 cases of radiation sickness reported and dozens of people died in the weeks following the explosion.



The Great Heck rail crash, also known as Selby, is the worst UK rail disaster of the 21st century. On February 28 2001, Gary Hart fell asleep while driving a Land Rover that was pulling a trailer on the M62. He'd had little to no sleep the night before. His vehicle veered off the roadway and down a steep embankment before coming to rest on the railway track. Hart got out of his vehicle just 60 seconds before a passenger train struck it and derailed. Shortly after, a second train ploughed into the wreckage.



Considered to be one of the worst environmental disasters of all time, the Exxon Valdez oil spill dumped almost 42 million litres of oil into Prince William Sound off the coast of Alaska on March 24, 1989. Captain Joseph Hazelwood was responsible for navigating the ship through familiar waters. Unfortunately, after drinking too much he gave the helm to Third Mate Gregory Cousins, who was barely functioning after only six hours sleep in two days.

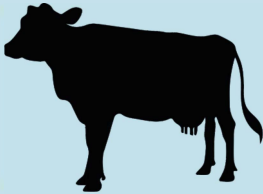
# How much sleep do these animals need daily?



**Choose from:**

3 hours / 4 hours / 2 hours / 8 hours / 10 hours / 11 hours / 12 hours /  
13 hours / 18 hours / 6 hours

A



B



C



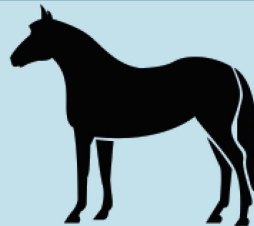
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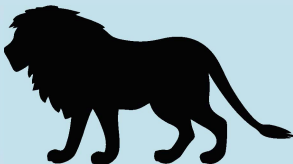
E



F



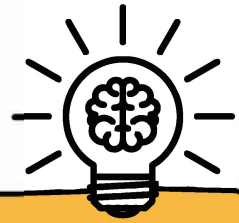
G



H



# How did you get on?



<b>A</b>	<b>4</b> Cows like to sleep close to their families. Sleeping arrangements are determined by social hierarchy.	<b>B</b>	<b>18!</b>
<b>C</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>E</b>	<b>12</b> Although you'd be forgiven for thinking it's more.	<b>F</b>	<b>3</b> Horses sleep standing up and they tend to snooze in small 15 minute chunks.
<b>G</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>10</b> Dolphins and whales have the ability to sleep with one half of their brain at a time. This prevents them from drowning in their sleep.



## How much sleep do humans need?

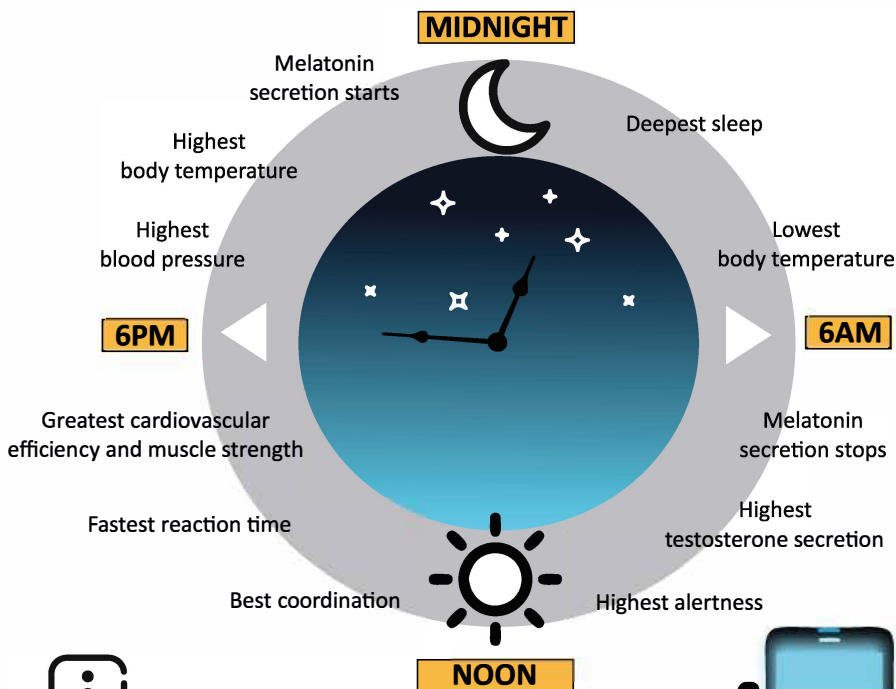
Adults need six to eight hours sleep per night. This varies from person to person.



Our sleep is guided by something called our circadian rhythms. These are 24-hour cycles that are part of the body's internal clock, running in the background to carry out essential functions and processes.

The sleep-wake cycle is one of the most important and well-known circadian rhythms. Circadian rhythms also have been widely observed in plants, animals and fungi.

So a circadian rhythm happens naturally but can be altered and changed by our behaviour and routines. A good example is breathing: we can hold our breath, slow our breathing, breathe harder when active and running. But it will happen automatically and continuously while we are living.



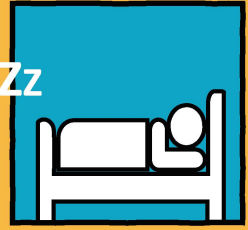
Research is exploring the effect smart phones and screens have on our sleep.

For example, the blue light that lights up our mobile phones can trick the body into believing it is day time which disrupts our natural circadian rhythm.



# What stops you from sleeping?

Zzzzz



Write your thoughts here.

A large, light blue rectangular area with a black outline, intended for writing thoughts. A yellow pencil icon is positioned in the top right corner, as if about to write on the paper.

Sleep can be disturbed for many reasons such as things we do: our diet, lifestyle, stress and not preparing well for sleep. Other reasons we don't always have control over.

# Sleep inequalities

Struggles with sleep can have a huge affect on our lives. When people are experiencing homelessness or living in temporary accommodation, additional factors that affect sleep can occur known as 'sleep inequalities'.

Below is a list of some of these inequalities. Think about which you relate to and any you would add.

Plastic mattress that makes you sweat and has been slept on by fifteen people over the past six months.

**A room crammed with all your belongings and the odour of previous occupants.**

Bad air circulation and windows that only open an inch for safety reasons.

**Noises and echoes in the hallway.**

Plastic, durable and noisy flooring being the order of the day.

**Curtains that may be fire proof but aren't light proof, so you're awake at 5am, assuming you got to sleep in the first place.**

Hostels feeling like 24 hour living beings.

**No dimming of lights or anything to signal that its night time.**

Leaving your room to use the loo and having to locking your door (not all cases).

**A room that's used as your dining room, socialising room and storage room. This doesn't make it useful or welcoming for sleeping.**

Staff freely entering your room after knocking and the feelings of vulnerability this creates, especially if you're not comfortable with staff.

**Adjusting to being inside and sleeping on a bed, and staff not necessarily helping or understanding this.**

Feeling unable to undress as you wouldn't on the street. So sleeping on the floor in your clothes.

# How can sleep be improved?

Hopefully while working through this workbook, you will have identified some things we do that affect our sleep such as caffeine, nicotine, alcohol, hunger, lack of routine and using mobile telephones or screens at night. These are things that are within our control.

We all have different routines or rituals that we do before sleep. This could be making sure doors are locked to feel secure, having a bath, or listening to music.

## **What are your routines or rituals?**

Write your thoughts here.



For many of us, sleep inequalities can be more disruptive to our sleep and relaxation than things we have control over. With some thought and the right approach, some of these inequalities could be addressed.

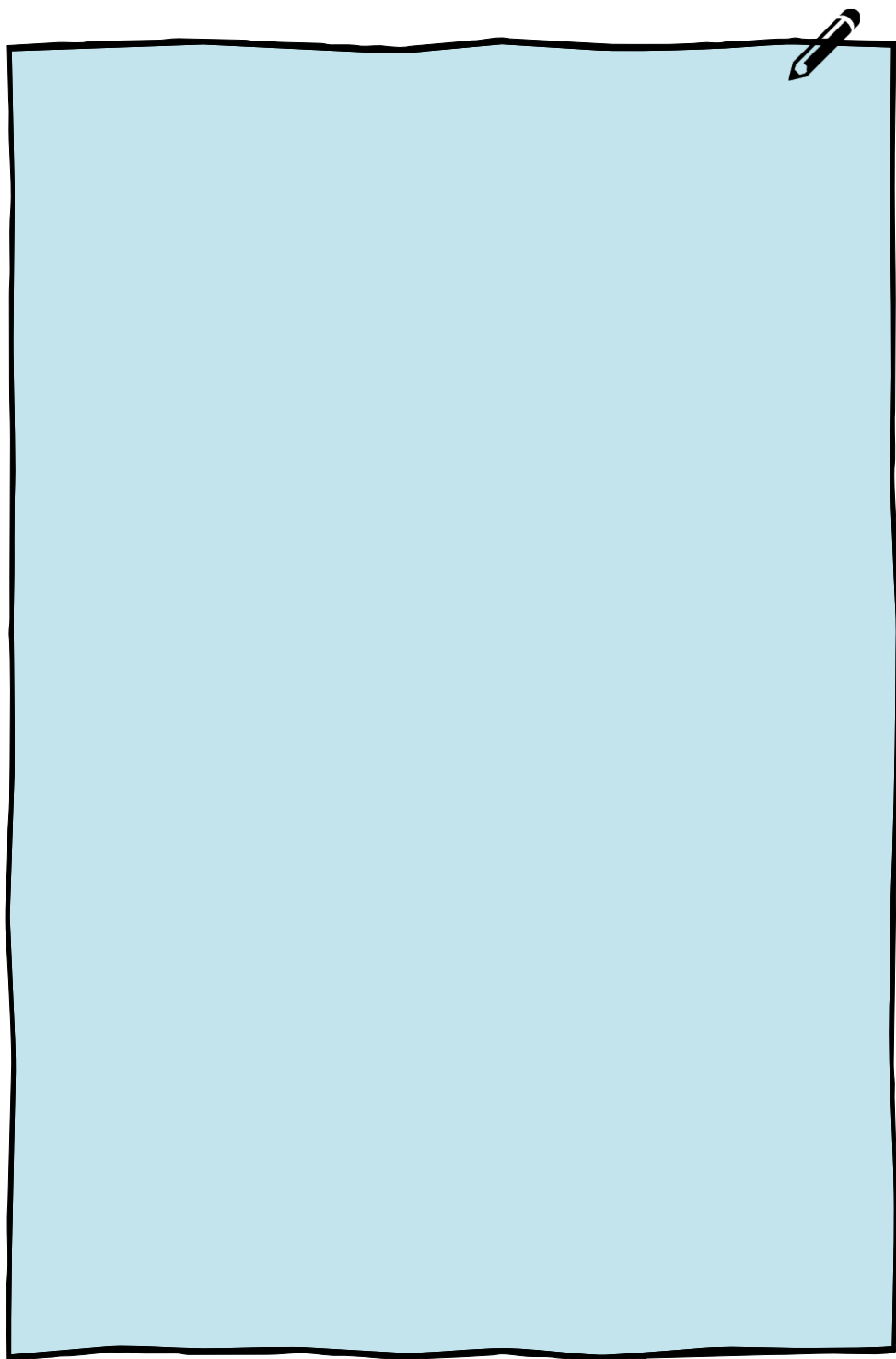
## How could sleep inequalities be addressed in your accommodation?



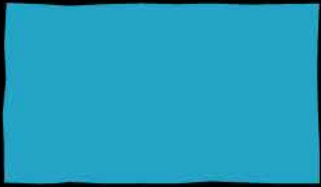
Write your thoughts here.

Below are some ideas others have taken to hostel staff teams to be addressed:

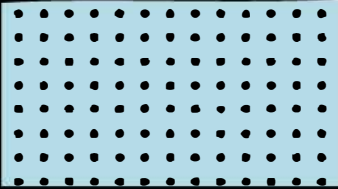
- "Door closers adjusted to stop them banging!"
- "Hot chocolate available in the evenings."
- "Lights dimmed in the hallways."
- "Signs put up reminding residents to be quiet after 10pm."
- "Staff to enforce noise reduction amongst residents at night."
- "New beds ordered when old ones are worn out."



## Homeless Health Peer Advocates will help you get your health problems sorted by:

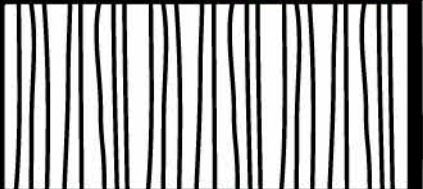


1 Helping you make health appointments



2 Going with you to health appointments

3 Supporting you to have your say about the type of health care you get



4 Paying for your travel fares if needed

5 Supporting you to make sense of health jargon and treatment options

Homeless Health Peer Advocates all have personal experience of homelessness and have been trained by Groundswell. They are available in many London boroughs and some other areas of the country. Ask a support worker whether they are available in your area. More information including how to refer: [groundswell.org.uk/what-we-do/homeless-health-peer-advocacy/](https://groundswell.org.uk/what-we-do/homeless-health-peer-advocacy/)

**Groundswell**  
Out of homelessness



020 7725 2851



[www.groundswell.org.uk](http://www.groundswell.org.uk)