

## How to Donate to Chesterfield & North Derbyshire Tinnitus Support Group

1. Send a cheque, payable to Chesterfield Tinnitus Support Group, to

Chesterfield & North Derbyshire Tinnitus Support Group,  
PO Box 833, Chesterfield, S40 9RU

2. Make a payment directly into our bank account or set up a standing order. Our bank details are as follows:

**Sort code:** 60 83 01

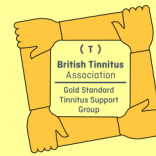
**Account no:** 20447083

**Account name:** Chesterfield & North Derbyshire Tinnitus Support Group

3. Donate online using the secure Charities Aid Foundation website:

- Go to [www.cafonline.org](http://www.cafonline.org)
- Click on the blue Donate to a Charity button at the top of the page
- Search for Chesterfield Tinnitus Support
- Select us from the list and click on the Donate button
- You can then make a payment using a card or PayPal

**localgiving** We received a Magic Little Grant of £500 through the partnership between Localgiving and Postcode Places Trust.



CHESTERFIELD & NORTH DERBYSHIRE

TINNITUS SUPPORT GROUP

Registered Charity Number: 1188354



Tel: 07821 132234

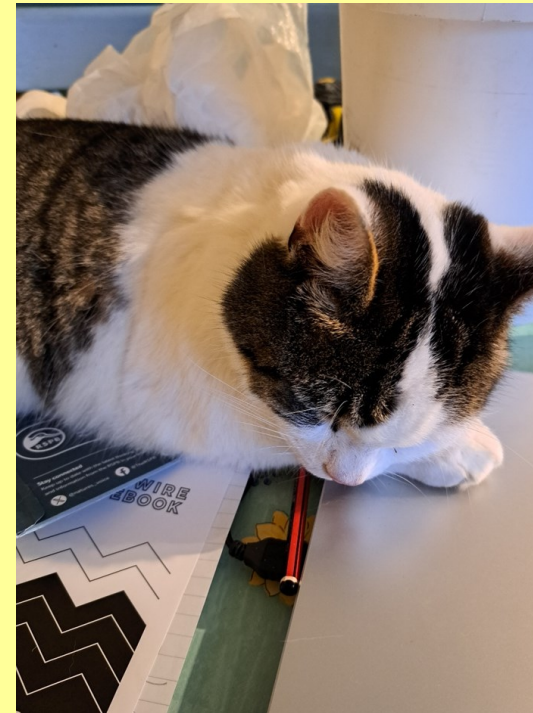
Chesterfield Tinnitus Support, PO Box 833, Chesterfield, S40 9RU

Email: [chesterfieldtinnitus@gmail.com](mailto:chesterfieldtinnitus@gmail.com)

## Wellbeing Magazine

March—April 2024

Edited by Audrey Carlin



I've planned the garden and now I need a sleep!

**MAGIC**   
**LITTLE GRANTS**

Special edition magazine sponsored by Magic Little Grants

## Meetings and Contents – March/April 2024

**AGM and Soup and Social Wednesday 8th May 2024 (Re-arranged)** (See end of Magazine for details and booking form)

The Science Behind Sleep by Joanne Gordon

Insomnia by Audrey Carlin

My Recipe for Sleep by Sarah Richards

The Military Sleep Method that promises to help you fall asleep in two minutes

The Secrets of Mental Energy with Hints to help you sleep – written by Editors of “Prevention” Magazine Health Books

Let Sleeping Dogs Lie by Sally Bawden

Pet Power by Joanne Gordon

My Visit to Skipton by Sarah Walters

“Sleeplessness” Poem by V. H. Friedlaender from ‘Mirrors and Angles’ 1931 Story by Audrey Carlin

Breakfast and Granola Recipe by Joanne Gordon

### SLEEP WELL

Thank you to everyone who donated to my skipping challenge. We appreciate your support.

## Soup and Social Booking Form

### FORM FOR THOSE RETURNING BY POST

Name.....

Mobile/Landline No. ....

Email.....

Name of person attending with you (if appropriate)

.....

Please state choice of sandwich(es)

.....

Special Dietary Requirements .....

PLEASE NOTE: If you book and then are unable to attend – please inform us AT LEAST 48 hours beforehand so we can inform the Badger.

Please return the booking form to: Joanne Gordon, Chesterfield & North Derbyshire Tinnitus Support Group, PO Box 833, Chesterfield, S40 9RU Or email: [chesterfieldtinnitus@gmail.com](mailto:chesterfieldtinnitus@gmail.com)

If you are booking by post please leave extra days for the post to arrive. Sending to a PO Box takes longer than normal post.



## Soup and Social

Re-arranged AGM and Raffle

**Wednesday 8th May 2024 11am—1pm**

**At The Badger, 81 Brockwell Lane S40 4ED**

**AGM business followed by talk and questions with Jodie Rogers—Senior Specialist Audiologists from Chesterfield Royal Hospital**

Lunch will be served with a choice of sandwiches. Choices are: Egg or Cheese or Ham on WHITE or BROWN Bread This will be accompanied by a mug of vegetable soup which is suitable for vegans and gluten free diet and home made chips Tea or coffee

Cost of the meal is £7.50 each

Payment: We will require you to pay on arrival please

**To book please contact Joanne on 07821 132234 or email [chesterfieldtinnitus@gmail.com](mailto:chesterfieldtinnitus@gmail.com) or use the form**

**Please book by latest Friday 3rd May 2024**

Raffle prizes would be gratefully received

## The Science behind Sleep by Joanne Gordon

According to a survey by Nuffield Health published in 2022, 74% of UK adults reported a decline in quality of sleep over the past 12 months. How to get a good night's sleep is also something many of our members have asked us about. In this *Special Edition* of our magazine *sponsored by Magic Little Grants*, we hope to answer some important questions about sleep. In particular why is sleep important, how much sleep do we need and what steps can we take to get a good night's sleep.

### Why is sleep important?

Professor Anil Seth of the New Scientist Academy, turns the question around stating it must be important for our 'survival and vitality' because we spend a third of our lives asleep, during that time we are 'entirely defenceless and passive'. If it wasn't crucial 'evolution would have weeded it out long ago'.

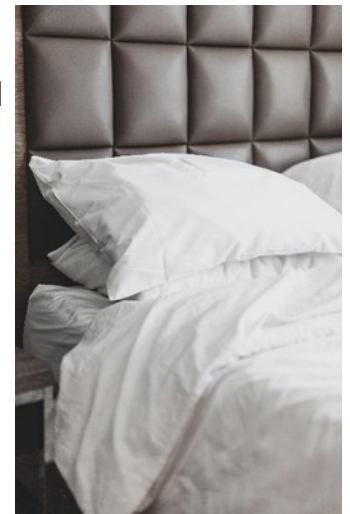
Research has shown that lack of sleep can lead to a number of physiological and psychological conditions. Lack of sleep interferes with attention, working memory, organisation and time management. It reduces the ability to fend off infection.

Feeling tired makes us feel hungry, thus we are more likely to over-eat especially sweet treats. It also crucially affects mood and mental health. Sleep is important for memory and learning.

Knowing a little about the science behind sleeping may help to understand why we struggle to get to sleep or back to sleep if we wake. The following information is taken from Future Learn/The New Scientist Academy.

### Light Sleep: NREM Stages 1 and 2

Once you have dropped off, you will enter non-rapid eye



movement sleep (NREM) stage 1. As the name suggests, your eyes remain still at this stage, and sleep is relatively light. It is not very difficult to wake someone up if they are in stage 1, and as the body and brain relax, you may find some muscles twitch, which could have the unfortunate effect of waking you up again.

After about seven minutes, you'll move into NREM stage 2, which is deeper and lasts about 25 minutes.

### **Deep, slow-wave, sleep: NREM stages 3 and 4**

As you passed through the first two stages of NREM sleep, your brainwaves will have slowed significantly from around 30 to 40 cycles per second to just two to four cycles per second, a slow and steady rhythm that begins in your frontal lobes, and which then spreads to the back of your brain, where the brain waves dissipate in strength. Slow-wave sleep can last for up to 40 minutes.

### **REM**

At regular intervals across the night, you'll move from NREM to REM (Rapid Eye Movement) sleep. It is a completely different state of being from the slow-wave sleep, since the brain regains some kind of consciousness in the form of dreams. You still are not aware of the outside world - instead, your brain conjures up its own inner world, which can be bizarre, funny, mundane, or terrifying. The EEG activity during REM sleep is similar to wakefulness.



## **Homemade granola**

Try this energy-boosting granola breakfast to start your day. Packed with heart-healthy oats, seeds, nuts and berries, it's sure to make you feel good.

### **Ingredients**

- 2 tbsp vegetable oil
- 125ml maple syrup
- 2 tbsp honey
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 300g rolled oats
- 50g sunflower seed
- 4 tbsp sesame seeds
- 50g pumpkin seeds
- 100g flaked almond
- 100g dried berries or fruit (find them in the baking aisle)
- 50g coconut flakes or desiccated coconut



### **Method**

#### **STEP 1**

Heat oven to 150C/fan 130C/gas 2. Mix the oil, maple syrup, honey and vanilla in a large bowl. Tip in all the remaining ingredients, except the dried fruit and coconut, and mix well.

#### **STEP 2**

Tip the granola onto two baking sheets and spread evenly. Bake for 15 mins, then mix in the coconut and dried fruit, and bake for 10-15 mins more. Remove and scrape onto a flat tray to cool. Serve with cold milk or yogurt. The granola can be stored in an airtight container for up to a month.

Source Good Food

You could include dried pineapple

You could also top the granola with fresh fruit including banana and kiwi

Her first published novel came out in 1922. In *Mainspring: the Growth of a Soul*, a man says to the leading female character: 'And in all these years I've never met the woman – the woman artist – who was willing to burn her boats; who, when it came to the point, really had the nerve to do it, and to know she had done the right thing, as I see you know it'.

Friedlaender published poems for many years and it was in 1931 that her collection was brought out in “Mirrors and Angles”.

## SLEEP WELL



### Breakfast by Joanne Gordon

After a good night's sleep, it is also important to have a good breakfast. Research has shown that those who regularly eat breakfast have a lower risk of both obesity and type 2 diabetes.

Eating breakfast helps to restore and maintain energy levels. Studies also suggest that not having breakfast affects mental performance, including attention, ability to concentrate and memory. This can make some tasks feel harder than they normally would.

People who eat breakfast generally have more healthy diets overall, have better eating habits and are less likely to be hungry for snacks during the day than people who skip breakfast.

Although some time ago we included a recipe for homemade granola, we thought it was worth including again, particularly as you can design your own recipe from the basic ingredients and include some of the fruit and nuts detailed earlier that can help promote a good night's sleep.

Source Better health

During this stage, our brainwaves speed up again, and the different regions fall out of synchrony with each other. This spontaneous activity can generate emotional responses and cause vivid scenes to play across your mind. Your brain temporarily paralyses your body to avoid you acting out your dreams.

You still lack activity in certain areas, such as the prefrontal and parietal cortices, areas that are thought to be responsible for things like logical thinking and self-reflection. This might explain why we have a sense of things happening, but don't really question what's going on, even if the events are completely ludicrous.

### New Scientist

We go through these sleep stages roughly every 90 minutes. This is important to know, especially for those who experience tinnitus. Tinnitus is unlikely to wake you, we all wake particularly between cycles and we usually wake between 2 – 4 times a night. According to Dr Katie Anderson, Consultant Neurologist, Newcastle Neuroscience Centre, sometimes we are not aware that we have woken. Once awake, then we may tune into/start monitoring our tinnitus, especially as everything in the external environment is quieter at night than during the day.

### How much sleep do we need?

If asked this question, you would probably reply that you need 8 hours sleep. However, this is a generalisation. Newborns and infants need up to 17 hours sleep, some young adults need around 11 hours whilst some only need 6. Sleep does decrease as we age from our mid-twenties onwards.

The US National Sleep Foundation recommends a range of 7 – 9 hours but with added leeway of an hour either side to account for natural variation. This is probably where the 8 hours has come from (as the middle number) but holding it as a magic number of required hours sleep can lead to additional stress and

anxiety.

Similarly, getting too much sleep can be problematic, though many people who sleep a lot may have underlying health conditions. Fragmented sleep is also a problem even if it adds up to 7 – 9 hours. That's because when sleep is interrupted, there isn't time to go through all the restorative sleep stages.

### **How to get a good night's sleep**

Once again knowing a little about the science of why we need to sleep can help here.

### **The need to sleep**

The need to sleep is controlled by a two-tier system according to the New Scientist Academy.

#### **Tier one**

The first tier is our circadian clock, which controls the twenty-four-hour cycle of body temperature, blood pressure and release of hormones. It relies on light to keep your sleep/wake pattern to roughly twenty-four hours.

#### **Tier two**

The second tier is sleep drive or sleep pressure. Throughout your waking hours a chemical called adenosine builds up in your brain, sending signals that increase your desire for sleep. After about sixteen hours, resisting that pressure becomes extremely difficult.

#### **Tier 1 - The Circadian Clock**

Deep inside the brain there is a tiny structure with a critical role. The suprachiasmatic nucleus (SCN), which is just 2 millimetres wide, controls the activity of our circadian rhythms (also referred to as our circadian clock) using light signals from the retina. Without these signals, it quickly loses its ability to keep time. This was demonstrated by Michel Siffre, an explorer, in 1962. Siffre spent 2 months in isolation in a dark cave in France



Violet Helen Friedlaender wrote under her initials as V. H. Friedlaender; the surname was sometimes anglicised as Friedlander. She joined the Women's Social and Political

Union (WSPU) in 1908, and became honorary secretary of the Forest Gate branch during the summer of 1909. She was born 'in the East', probably Palestine, as it was from Palestine that she travelled as a child to foggy London, where she was sent to St Mary's Hall (age 10<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> ).

V.H. Friedlaender was a suffragette and friend of Emmeline Pankhurst. In 1909 the women's movement had split and although the WSPU was still dominant, the women of East London, who had been so prominent in it in the early days were largely sidelined and the Canning Town branch was in disarray, if not totally disbanded. The WSPU grew increasingly militant nationally in its tactics and in 1912 she took part in a window smashing campaign and was sentenced to four months in jail.



The second daughter of Emmeline Pankhurst was Sylvia, remembered chiefly for her use of militant tactics in the fight for women's right to vote.

However, since both Sylvia Pankhurst and V.H. Friedlaender were writers, it seems very likely that they belonged to the Women Writers'

Suffrage League, which was very active about this time. In 1909 the League was co-operating with the Actresses' Franchise League to put on shows starring Ellen Terry at the Scala Theatre. Friedlaender's novels show she was very conscious of her position in society as a woman and an artist.

## **SLEEPLESSNESS** by V. H. Friedlaender

Hush the clamour of thoughts  
Beating about your mind;  
Send the rabble of memories  
Flying, and stay behind.

Lock the door of your heart  
On hope as on despair;  
Before your spirit can take flight  
There must be quiet there.

Then on green fields of sleep  
Open one window wide;  
And hark how afar, afar, afar,  
Swings in a summer tide.

Give yourself to the tide  
Like a boat, hold nothing back;  
For upon those waters now you go  
Softly to what you lack:

Ah, not to your heart's desire!  
But yet to Oblivion,  
That shall ease your wounds through the deep dark hours  
For tomorrow's fight. Swing on.

I bought the second-hand book many years ago called "Mirrors and Angles and decided to research the book and found it was published in 1931 by 'Country Life Limited' it is written by V.H. Friedlaender and illustrated from pencil sketches by Margaret Dobson, A.R.E. whose pencil sketches accompany most of the poems.

without access to a clock, communicating with researchers at the surface using only a phone. His body clock shifted a little each day. Sometimes he slept 12 or 16 hours, he could also be awake for 36 hours without realising it.

Furthermore, living in the dark has an impact on mood. Morten Halmo Petersen used to live in a windowless basement flat in Copenhagen. If he didn't get out in the daytime, he'd start becoming irritated and depressed. According to Linda Geddes in



the New Scientist "Today, the average Westerner spends 90 per cent of their life indoors. That means we are getting less light during the day and being exposed to more light at night.

This pattern is increasingly being linked to disrupted sleep and circadian rhythms – 24-hour fluctuations in our biology and behaviour – with consequences for our physical and mental health."

### **More about managing Light**

Before bed, switch off as many lights as possible in the last hour before bed so as not to interfere with the natural production of the sleep hormone melatonin, which is produced in the evening and tells the body and brain that it is time to get ready for bed. Dim, red light before bed is best.

1. Use table lamps rather than bright overhead lights.
2. Install warm-toned light bulbs or invest in dimmable, colour-changing bulbs.
3. Tablets, phones and laptops generate short wavelength blue light, which can interfere with melatonin production. One experiment compared the sleep patterns of people who read a book on an iPad before bed with those who read it in print. After a few days, those reading on screen were taking longer to nod off and getting less REM sleep.

I know Mum likes to watch TV before going to bed, and if you do too, don't worry; while the light from the box is bright, we normally watch from far enough away to avoid the melatonin effect. However, be sure to watch something relaxing.



### Tier 2 – The pressure to sleep

Sounds boring but create a routine. Go to bed and wake up at the same time, no matter what, even if you have had a bad night of sleep or it is the weekend. The wake-up time is the most important as this will build up your sleep drive during the day. According to the New Scientist you shouldn't need an alarm, you should wake naturally as part of your routine.

I head for Skipton Town Hall and the Museum of Craven Life, which is free to enter. This contains a small display about the mill, which was once one of the town's main employers. There are examples of packaging and a pristine set of cotton reels. There is also a board commemorating long serving employees which was taken from the mill when it closed. This shows that many people spent their whole working life producing Sylko reels and also the re-occurring surnames show how many families worked there.

My day was topped off with the best Fat Rascal bun I've ever had in a cafe by the canal. I head home again using the same train services and was back in time for tea. A brilliant day out that I would recommend.

*Thank you Sarah for taking us with you on your interesting journey through the countryside into Yorkshire and one which I hope our readers will wish to take*



### **SLEEPLESSNESS** by V. H. Friedlaender

From the book "Mirrors & Angles" 1931 story by Audrey Carlin

When I read this poem, it made me wonder if V. H. Friedlaender suffered from tinnitus as the verses led me to believe she may have done, so I decided to research the poet and her lifestyle convinced me that she may, in fact, have done so.



and the words The Cotton Mill proudly state the history of the associated buildings. Sadly it isn't possible to go inside - though if you search local estate agents you can see photos of some of the flats that are currently for sale. They look compact and neat with just the occasional trace of the building's former use, such as girders on show.

Around the back of the mill is the original means of transporting the goods - the Leeds and Liverpool Canal. This is now a bucolic walk but it would have once heaved with barges bringing in raw cotton. I walked along here, peering along different alleys and taking the close up photo of the chimney. As you pass the mill, there is a small bridge over the canal. This takes you directly into Aireville Park - a big expanse of grass and woodland heavily populated by rabbits. If you walk up through the park you arrive at what is now Skipton Academy School - but the original



building at the heart of the complex was Aireville House. This was the home of the Dewhurst family, who owned the mill and the Sylko brand. As it is now a school I didn't dare take photos or try to get into see it, but you can get an idea of how the Dewhursts lived, and imagine Algernon

Dewhurst trotting through his parkland on his horse, heading to the mill to give out orders and check up on his business.

Walking back along the canal, you come to the town centre and into the hub of tourist Skipton. There is a canal basin, castle, church and many shops catering for the tourists.

## Food and drink

The New Scientist Academy recommends

- Avoid caffeine after 1 pm
- Avoid alcohol after 6 pm

These may not be popular tips but as Dr Katie Anderson says, if you drink caffeine and sleep well, then all is good, but if you don't, these recommendations may help and here is why.

Caffeine is rapidly absorbed into the body and crosses cell membranes into the central nervous system. It blocks the uptake of adenosine, the neurotransmitter responsible for relaxing your brain and regulating fatigue. It also increases blood adrenaline levels and increases the amount of dopamine in your brain.

Alcohol is a sedative, but sedation is not sleep. Unfortunately, it is easy to mistake one for the other, and if you regularly use alcohol to help you sleep you should think again, as it can be counter-productive. Having a few drinks before bed disrupts slow-wave sleep, adding a boost of alpha brainwaves that are usually only present in the daytime.

However, there is some good news, there are food groups which can aid sleep. If you fancy a drink in the evening try sour cherry juice. It's rich in melatonin, and a recent study found that after seven days, healthy adults who drank it twice a day got, on average, thirty-four minutes more sleep and napped less during the day.

The US National Sleep Foundation (NSF) also recommends: almonds, walnuts, bananas, pineapple, oranges and kiwi fruit as sources of melatonin. Eating tryptophan-rich foods has been shown to make people feel sleepier. The NSF says that low serotonin levels can contribute to insomnia and recommends eating cottage cheese before bed, perhaps



sweetened with melatonin-rich fruits.

### Napping

I've spoken to friends and family and many of us love a nap, but is a nap good for us?

According to the New Scientist Academy, napping can still be a smart and efficient way to reap the rewards of sleep. A ten-minute 'nano-nap' can boost alertness, concentration and attention for as much as four hours afterwards. You are also unlikely to enter the deeper stages of sleep, so will avoid the phenomenon known as sleep inertia, the groggy feeling that can occur when awoken from deep sleep. But you won't get the benefits of deep sleep which provides the biggest boost to learning. If that's your aim, opt for a nap of between sixty and ninety minutes. Such a longer nap could also improve your positivity.

A forty-five-minute nap should take you through a cycle of REM, and brain scans of people following a REM sleep nap showed more positive responses to images and to pleasant experiences. However, light sleep turns out to be more important than we thought. If you want to keep it brief, drink a cup of coffee immediately beforehand – the caffeine kicks in after about twenty minutes, waking you up refreshed. So, caffeine does have its place! This may seem contrary to the advice about no caffeine after 1pm especially if you like an afternoon nap, but this tip should be used in moderation.

**This of course, begs the question, can we have catch-up sleep?**

I am a nervous driver and never go anywhere long distance by car. I love trains, so whenever I need to go anywhere outside Derbyshire I always go by rail. I took the Cross Country train from Chesterfield to Leeds (about an hour) and then changed to the Leeds-Settle-Carlisle service.

This is a scenic route and a popular way to see the Dales so the train was quite busy with people in hiking gear. The route follows the path of the River Aire for much of it and there is a lot to see from the window. Early on in the journey you pass through Saltaire and get a good view of the magnificent Salt's Mill. The stop previous to Skipton is Keighley, home of the Worth Valley Railway and it's very possible to see a steam engine waiting for passengers in the station. After departing this station, you can tell that you are leaving the "dark satanic mills" of West Yorkshire behind and crossing over into the more rural North Yorkshire and the edge of the Dales. There are sheep, pasture and winding rivers - and at one point I saw a

deer casually watching the train pass while chewing on some foliage. It took just over half an hour to travel from Leeds to Skipton, meaning that overall my journey took less than 2 hours, which I was quite impressed with.



On exiting the station, it didn't take me long to find Belle Vue Mill - in fact I could hardly miss it! It stands across the road from the railway - which makes sense as this would have been the method of shipping in all of the raw materials and sending the finished reels out into the world. As you can see from the photos, the mill chimney is still a prominent feature -



Cats are independent, so there is nothing more heart-warming than a cat rubbing against my legs or jumping up to my hand to be stroked.

*I totally agree with you Joanne, pets are a great comfort in times of sadness and can provide a sense of reassurance and comfort to ease us through life's challenges and tribulations*

Sarah Walters now takes us on a relaxing journey to Skipton travelling by rail through the countryside, with a walk along the canal and taking in the scenery and history. A perfect day out taking in the sights and sounds and one which, I am sure, would prepare you for a good night's sleep.

## My Visit to Skipton by Sarah Walters

Having been a collector and enthusiast of Sylko cotton reels for so long, it seemed to be the natural next step to visit the place where they had come from. The cotton had been dyed,



processed, reeled up and packed at the Belle Vue Cotton Mill in Skipton, North Yorkshire, for many years until the demise of the British cotton industry. I knew that the mill was still standing, and had been converted into council offices and flats, so where better to head for on a summer day out? Skipton is the gateway to the Yorkshire Dales and a popular tourist destination, so there is plenty to do besides track down old cotton mills!

The evidence here is a little conflicted but the simple answer is **NO**.

According to the New Scientist Academy, the acute effects of sleep deprivation are reversed when you catch up on the hours of sleep you have lost. If you've built up a sleep debt the solution is to repay it as soon as possible with a lie-in or a nap. However, 'rebound sleep' 'burning the candle at both ends during the week and then catching up on sleep at the weekend, a phenomenon known as social jet lag, does not have any benefits. In fact, it might cause health problems associated with fragmented sleep similar to the evidence of health problems experienced by shift-workers.

### Other tips

- **Exercise** – is important to help sleep. If your mobility is restricted, try chair-based exercises.



- **Don't lie in bed worrying about Sleep** – Avoid lying in bed awake for a significant period of time, for example, over 20 minutes. As Dr Katie Anderson stated "Take the agitation of sleep out of the bedroom." Try a relaxing activity, light reading, colouring, but don't switch on any electronic devices.
- Your body core temperature needs to drop by approximately 1.2°C to get to sleep. This is why it's much harder to fall asleep in a room that's too hot than one that's too cold. About 18.5°C is optimal, which is probably colder than you think. Too cold and you may struggle to get to sleep as well.

- Take a warm bath before bed. Research has shown that it is the cooling down process after the warm bath that aids sleep.



**Remember we are all unique and like managing tinnitus, finding what works to get a good night's sleep will be individual to you.**

[All pictures are internet images]

## **SUMMARY TIPS TO GET A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP**

### **1. *Get outside and take in Natural Light***



**2. *Prepare yourself for bed by switching off artificial light***

**3. *Create a routine, go to bed and wake up at the same time every morning***

**4. *Avoid caffeine after 1pm and alcohol after 6pm***

**5. *Try sour cherry juice***

**6. *Exercise***

**7. *If you wake during the night – get up and try a relaxing activity***

## **Disadvantages of owning pets**

For me the joy of owning pets will always outweigh any disadvantages, but there are of course cons. Pets take commitment, care and can be expensive, not only buying food but vet bills or regular insurance payments to cover veterinary expenses. They may also cause damage to your home. The back of one of the patio window curtains hung almost in ribbons as Bailey practised his tree climbing skills.

## **Sleep and pets**

As we are focusing on sleep in this edition, it is worth pointing out that pets can both aid and disrupt sleep. There is nothing more relaxing than stroking a pet cat and listening to the soft hum of its purr. Furthermore, Dr. Bhanu Prakash Kolla, a sleep medicine specialist in the Center for Sleep Medicine at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. "There can be significant psychological comfort in having your pet close by, which can help both initiate and maintain sleep." If you live alone, sleeping with a pet can increase your sense of security and heighten comfort levels. Feeling safe and relaxed is extremely important and can drastically improve your sleep quality.

However, Bailey wakes me regularly around 3 – 4am tapping my cheek until I get up and feed him. It's so cute that I allow it, he'd only scratch the door if I didn't let him in. Other pets may be nocturnal or a dog may bark in the night spooked by the slamming of a car door.

The death of a beloved pet can be very traumatic.

There are of course pets which are lower maintenance, watching brightly coloured goldfish or Koi in a garden pond can be a mindfulness moment. Other alternatives to owning a pet can be visiting places like Matlock Farm Park.

Through times of stress, anxiety and loneliness owning or perhaps more accurately being guardian of a cat has helped me through.

This can be hugely beneficial not just in daily life but also in times of stress. Furthermore, owning a dog means that you have to keep physically active and get out in nature by taking your dog for a walk. It may also increase social interaction, saying hello to other dog owners or walkers.

Pet therapy with dogs, alpacas and horses has been widely used in nursing homes. In 2017 a Royal College of Nursing study of over 750 nurses revealed nine out of 10 believed animals improved the wellbeing of patients with mental health problems such as depression, and six out of 10 felt the presence of animals in hospital could speed up their patient's physical recovery.

The benefits of owning a pet can also stem to society and have wider Economic implications.

***The Economic Impact of Companion Animals in the UK*** suggests companion animals have a massive beneficial impact on the NHS

- It is estimated that pet ownership in the UK may reduce use of the NHS to the value of £2.45 billion/year through reduced visits to the doctor.
- In 2017 2.28 million people in the UK were diagnosed with an anxiety disorder costing the economy approximately £8.9 billion. It is projected by 2026, 2.56 million anxiety-related diagnoses will be made, costing the economy approximately £14.2 billion.
- Pet owners report fewer sick days from work, thereby saving employers and businesses stress and money.



## **8. Keep your room cool**

## **9. Take a warm bath**

*Thank you Joanne for your interesting article Over the years, we have discussed and written about sleep; however, I think this article is one of the best and I think that, by just remembering the “summary tips” will help you to make some positive changes towards a good night’s sleep.*



## **Insomnia by Audrey Carlin**

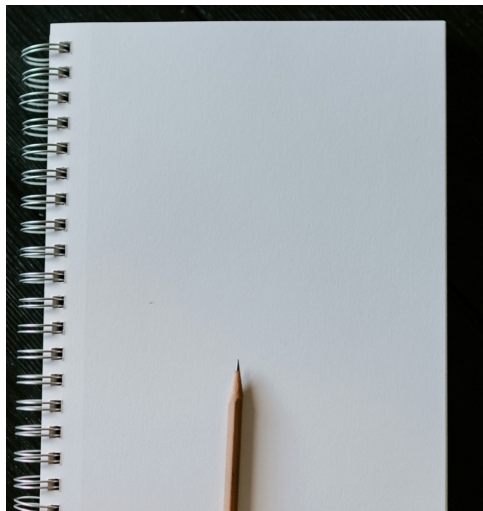
Insomnia is a broad term that encompasses any and all difficulties with sleep, including the inability to fall asleep or to stay asleep.

The following information is taken from “The complete homeopathy handbook” by Miranda Castro which reinforces what we, as a group, usually recommend to people who experience sleep difficulties as a result of tinnitus or other stress-related conditions. No matter what article you may read about Sleep, there will always be a crossover of advice but we hope you will find some snippets of advice that you may not have already tried that may help you.

Miranda says “As we grow older, we need less sleep and, generally, we may need less sleep than we think. If you are insomniac, repeat to yourself before going to sleep that you are going to sleep deeply and wake refreshed, instead of panicking about not sleeping enough and expecting to feel awful in the morning. Amazingly this really helps.” Here are some tips.

- **DO** Take gentle exercise such as a walk around your garden or park, or an exercise routine before bed
- **DO** Relax in a warm bath
- **DO** Read very boring books/magazines in bed
- **DO** Wear an eye mask to cut out light if necessary
- **DO** Make sure your mattress is right for you (not too hard or too soft)
- **DO** Develop a regular bedtime relaxation routine, including deep breathing and perform this twice before going to bed
- **DO** Sit up and make a list of all worries and frustrations if you can't sleep because of them
- **DO** Make sure you are warm enough (but not too hot) and that your room is well ventilated
- **DO** Take a hot, caffeine-free drink to bed: hot milk with honey or a cup of chamomile tea if you feel tense (do read the article in the "Insomnia" section regarding chamomile)

It can help to put a notepad and pen at the side of your bed just in case you think of something that you want to remember the next day. This will help to get it out of your mind and onto paper.



- **DON'T** Worry! This always makes it worse
- **DON'T** Read thrillers, ghost stories or material connected with your work
- **DON'T** Have a large meal close to bedtime
- **DON'T** Drink tea, hot chocolate, coffee or Coca Cola



Thank you Sally for your very fascinating information about Dogs and Sleep. I am sure our dog owners will gain so much from your dog training expertise. Read more about Sally on her website



## Pet Power by Joanne Gordon

Walking up the garden, from the corner of my eye, something grey and white is crouching behind a blue ceramic container. Bright eyes shine and Bailey's pink nose is visible poking around the pot. Pretending not to notice, I continue walking, he shoots out, grabs me briefly by throwing paws around my leg and is gone scampering up the nearest tree, before running down again and disappearing from the garden. My laugh punctuates the air.

I adopted Bailey mid-November 2019, months before the country was plunged into lockdown. He kept me entertained, as well as active, having to continue to excuse myself from zoom meetings, as his small paws hammered on the patio doors to be let in.

### Evidence

According to the website "First Aid for Pets", pets have power, research has shown that owning a pet can improve mental and physical health, lower blood pressure, reduce anxiety and loneliness.

Sleep can also help dogs to process their emotions, happy and sad, and calm down from things that have happened during the day.

Let's look at some sleeping positions and see what they represent.

Side sleeping means that your dog is fully relaxed and feels safe, comfortable and in familiar surroundings.

When dogs sleep on their tummy it means

that they can quickly spring up onto their feet so is often the position of choice for busy dogs not wanting to miss out on a piece of the action, it also helps them cool down. When dogs sleep in a tight donut ball it helps them keep warm and can be seen in sweet natured and slightly nervous dogs or just mean that they simply prefer this position sometimes.

Finally, dogs are social sleepers and being with others is a survival instinct for safety, warmth and food. When you first bring a new puppy home this can be very scary for them so they should initially sleep close to you in your room and then gradually the distance between you and them can be increased. If you want to continue to sleep with your dog into adulthood there are many benefits for your dog and you (as long as they don't take all the space and covers!).

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- **DON'T** Watch too much television, work or read anything upsetting
- **DON'T** Get into the habit of afternoon naps or sleeping very late in the morning as this can make it more difficult to get back to a normal sleeping pattern
- **DON'T** Take sleeping pills. These can affect your dream life so that you wake feeling unrefreshed, and many have side effects, causing drowsiness and dependence.
- **DON'T** Drink alcohol steadily throughout the evening

## LAVENDER



James A Duke, PhD, writes in his book 'Green Pharmacy' "I've seen accounts of British hospitals using lavender oil to help patients sleep at night. The hospitals administer the oil either in a warm bath or sprinkled onto bedclothes. Lavender oil is also a favourite of aromatherapists, who use it for all sorts of ailments, including insomnia. Because the oil helps to slow nerve

impulses, it can help reduce irritability and bring on sleep. It also has an anaesthetic effect. But **beware:** not all lavender is tranquilising. Some species, especially Spanish lavender, might have a stimulating action similar to Rosemary. When you buy lavender oil, be prepared to try it out to discover whether it's soothing.

## CATNIP



According to James A Duke, PhD, “The plant that intoxicates most cats also has mild tranquilising-hypnotic-sedative effects on many people. Catnip contains chemicals (nepetalactone isomers) similar to the sedative constituents of Valerian. And being a member of the mint family, Catnip tastes much better than Valerian. You can try a cup of tea about 45 minutes before

bedtime.”

However, I would add at this point that I have never tried Catnip but Joanne’s cats love it. We grew some from seed and now have a selection of little plants, but because the cats roll all over it, it needs to be a very sturdy plant before they are allowed to do so as they will flatten it. I prefer to see the cats use it than try it myself!

*[Joanne’s cat, Stanley, playing with his Catnip toy, after which he was completely relaxed]*



[Source of information for the following article taken from Google search]

If your dog is having problems sleeping, things to consider are their toileting routines, that they have had enough to eat, that they are getting the right amount of exercise and mental enrichment in the day, that it is dark enough so you could put a blanket over their crate. Establishing a night time routine with calming activities is useful using products such as a diffuser, calming music and calming body massage.

Dogs are in an alert ready for action state in a second’s notice if they are disturbed or woken up and it is never advised to intentionally disturb a dog when they are sleeping as they can have an excessive startle response and have been known to bite as a reflex response to being woken abruptly. Dalmations were bred as guard dogs for horses so they sleep with one eye open! When dogs wake up, they are fully functioning; have you ever opened the fridge door when you thought your dog was in a deep sleep to find them stood next to you in a flash wondering what you have for them?

High activity breeds like border collies do need a lot of mental stimulation and exercise but they were also bred to be able to switch off and chill when they weren’t required to ‘work’ so it is important to help them get this sleep and rest time as it is with all breeds.



Sleep helps dogs to store things to memory and helps with decision making. If you do some training with your dog, it is of no benefit to repeat the same exercises until after your dog has slept

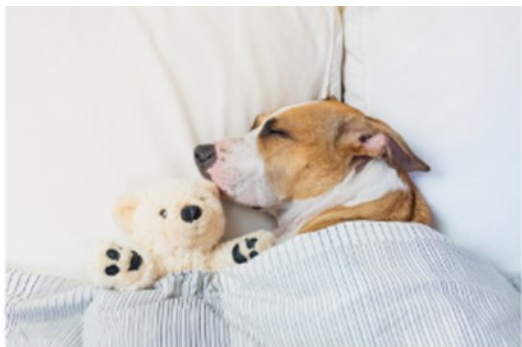
because the prior learning hasn’t had time to store to memory and they will be less likely to retain the learning.



Puppies need on average about 18-20 hours and adult dogs 12-14 hours, elderly dogs may sleep much more and larger breeds nap more and for longer. It can be difficult to know exactly how much sleep our dogs get as they are polyphasic sleepers which means that they are able to sleep at any time of day if they are tired. They snooze in small segments spread over the day and then a deeper sleep at night time but will still probably have some time awake during the night. Humans on the other hand are monophasic sleepers as we get all our sleep in one long block. Dogs do dream like us and when they do little woofs and twitches is when they are in REM sleep.

Dogs are crepuscular meaning that they are more active at dusk and dawn which explains why some dogs need to expend energy at dusk and get very busy as it's when they would have gone out hunting. They have learnt to adapt to our habit of starting to rest at dusk but many people often comment that their dogs go crazy during the witching hour of dusk!

One way to help our dogs to get enough sleep is to provide several sleeping areas in different areas of the house, away from windows, radiators and draughts and high traffic areas. Places they can go and escape in peace and quiet but not totally isolated from the family.



Having more than 1 bed means that they get to choose where they would like to sleep which gives them a great feeling of control. Some dogs even like having a pillow to rest their head on. Some dogs don't always want to be stroked when they are resting or asleep so we should let them be.

## CHAMOMILE



Chamomile is one of the most ancient medicinal herbs known to mankind. It is represented by two common varieties - German Chamomile (*Chamomilla recutita*) and Roman Chamomile (*Chamaemelum nobile*). The dried flowers of chamomile contain

many terpenoids and flavonoids contributing to its medicinal properties. Chamomile preparations are commonly used for many human ailments, including insomnia. Many different preparations of chamomile have been developed, the most popular of which is in the form of herbal tea consumed more than one million cups per day.

Herbs have been integral to both traditional and non-traditional forms of medicine dating back at least 5000 years. One of the most common herbs used for medicinal purposes is chamomile whose standardised tea and herbal extracts are prepared from dried flowers.

Traditionally, chamomile preparations such as tea and essential oil aromatherapy have been used to treat insomnia and to induce sedation (calming effects). Chamomile is widely regarded as a mild tranquilliser and sleep-inducer.

### Benefits of Chamomile Tea

Apart from being a tasty tea ingredient, chamomile also has plenty of health benefits.

- **Contains anti-inflammatory properties**

Chamomile tea contains anti-inflammatory properties, and drinking chamomile tea has been shown to reduce symptoms of

inflammation. If you suffer from a chronic inflammatory condition like arthritis, chamomile can help to soothe pain and make you more comfortable.

- **Soothes cold symptoms**

A cup of chamomile tea is also a great herbal remedy for the common cold. Studies have shown that chamomile can be beneficial in reducing cold symptoms when you're feeling under the weather.

- **Good for your heart**

Chamomile contains beneficial properties that are good for your heart. While studies concerning chamomile's heart-healthy potential are still ongoing, research suggests that consuming chamomile tea may be helpful for those who suffer from illnesses like coronary heart disease.

- **Helps with digestion**

A cup of chamomile tea after a rich meal can help to aid in digestion and soothe stomach troubles. Chamomile has been shown to reduce symptoms of acid reflux, ward off bloating and gas and contribute to overall gastrointestinal health.

- **Good for Sleep**

Chamomile tea has been used for centuries as a sleep and relaxation aid. Chamomile tea has a mild sedative effect that is great for inducing sleep. After you fall asleep, chamomile can help to improve sleep quality so that you wake up rested and refreshed. Chamomile has also been shown to help sleep quality problems associated with depression and other mental health issues.

**Paint your bedroom** – Light colours are best. Look for peach, pink, pale green and aqua to be the best for soothing you into slumber.

**Set aside some quiet time** – Before bedtime, begin a ritual you will follow each night. Take about 10 minutes to reflect on your day's activities. Plan tomorrow's. Try to work out solutions to problems, then put your cares aside.

**Keep strict mealtimes** – Regular meals tell your body that its internal clock is working properly. Also, avoid eating heavy meals at bedtime when they can cause reflux or heartburn.



## Let Sleeping Dogs Lie by Sally Bawden



It is always important to consider sleep when looking at the general lifestyle of our dogs as lack of it can cause grumpiness, snapping and hyper activity. It is the key to physical, emotional and cognitive health. One of the questions on my consultation form for 1:1

training session is - how much rest or sleep does your dog get in a typical 24 hour cycle. This is so that we can consider if lack of sleep is triggering behavioural issues and then we can look at ways to improve this.

**Feel yourself breathe for a minute.** This is probably the fastest method of releasing stress. Turn your attention from what's going on around you to your own body. Just focus for a minute on the sensation of your breath flowing in and out of your nose. You'll calm down immediately. *[I do feel this exercise is very helpful and well worth learning as a regular technique.]*

**Breathe from your belly.** Most of us breathe incorrectly. We should be breathing from our diaphragms instead of from our chest. By breathing so deeply that your stomach (instead of your chest) is gently rising and falling. This can be done any time and no one needs to know you are doing it says Dr Uhes.

**Scan for body tension.** Tension can creep into your body and stay there. Dr Nuernberger advises a "body scan" for speedy relief. Close your eyes, breathe deeply and mentally scan your body to find tension. When you hit the spot, briefly tense that muscle and then release it while you imagine the area relaxing.

**Walk it off.** Adult educator and workplace wellness expert, says it's easy, everyone knows how to do it and its benefits are almost immediate.

## Hints to help you to sleep

**Have a full day** – Researchers at Loughborough University found that people who have an active day are more likely to have restful sleep at night. They studied volunteers who spent periods of four days in the sleep lab. On one of the four days, the volunteers went to a distant city where they shopped, went to a museum, visited an amusement park and zoo and then watched a movie. That night the volunteers conked out earlier and had longer than usual periods of restful sleep. They awoke feeling refreshed.

- **Reduces anxiety**

A cup of chamomile tea can also help to reduce stress and alleviate anxiety. Chamomile is well known for its relaxing properties and makes a soothing, aromatic cup of tea that's perfect for any time of day. Since chamomile is also a very mild sedative, it can help you to calm down both physically and mentally.

- **Soothes sore throats**

Studies have shown that chamomile tea can help to soothe sore throats and reduce hoarseness. A spoonful of honey in a cup of chamomile tea is especially beneficial, since honey also contains soothing, antimicrobial properties.

- **Good for your immune system**

Drinking chamomile may also be good for your immune system. While studies concerning chamomile's many benefits are still ongoing, recent research indicates that chamomile may contain antibacterial properties that can help to ward off illness and keep your immune system in tip-top shape.

## About Chamomile Tea

Chamomile has been used as a folk remedy and soothing herbal infusion for hundreds of years. Ancient Greeks, Romans, and Egyptians all revered chamomile for its medicinal properties and today chamomile is still used around the world for its soothing, nourishing effects. The English word "chamomile" is derived from the Greek word *khamaimēlon*, meaning "earth apple," which refers to chamomile's characteristic apple-like sweetness.

While "chamomile" can refer to a number of different similar flowering plants, chamomile used for tea is typically grown from either the Roman Chamomile plant or the German Chamomile plant. Chamomile can also be used in beer and wine making or

as an essential oil.

Today, chamomile used for tea is often grown in Egypt. Egyptian chamomile is of extremely high quality and is notable for its natural sweetness. While commercial chamomile found in teabags or sachets is often made of broken dust and fannings left over from the largest flower heads, high-quality chamomile is distinguished by its large, fragrant flower heads and exceptional flavour. [Fannings are small pieces of tea that are left over after higher grades of teas are gathered to be sold. Traditionally these were treated as the rejects of the manufacturing process in making high quality leaf tea like the orange pekoe.]

### **Brewing Chamomile Teas**

To prepare chamomile herbal tea, we recommend using about one heaped teaspoon of tea leaves for every six ounces of water in your pot or cup. Full-flower chamomile teas can often be very light and fluffy, so it's okay to add a little more tea if necessary. Heat water to a full boil, then infuse your tea for about five minutes. Enjoy chamomile tea on its own, or add a spoonful of honey for a little extra sweetness

### **CONTRA-INDICATIONS OF CHAMOMILE**

There are Contraindications connected with drinking Chamomile Tea – **so I would urge you to run it past your GP or Pharmacist especially if you are on prescribed medications.** Below are just a few that were mentioned in the article.

- Pregnant women
- If you are allergic to asters, daisies, chrysanthemums or ragweed, you may also be allergic to chamomile.
- Drinking a lot of highly concentrated chamomile tea may cause vomiting.
- Chamomile may cause drowsiness so be aware of driving or using machinery.

determine your best amount of sleep, go to bed 30 to 60 minutes earlier for several days. When you find yourself awaking naturally (without the alarm) and feeling alert, you have established your optimal sleep time.

When you first wake up in the morning, stay awake. Studies of mental alertness show that a good outlook begins at the very start of the day. Lying in bed can produce negative thoughts and can make you heavy and drowsy if you go back to sleep.

Stress and tension are often self-created as stress, and create stress based on their needs and expectations. When reality conflicts with these needs, you feel stressed.

Experts have come up with all kinds of fast-action methods to kick stress out the door. Here are a few:

***Jot down your thoughts*** – a thought journal – just by writing down the negative thoughts that are flashing through your mind, you see how useless most of them are.

***Listen to music*** – listening to music is a great stress reliever and it's important to pick your personal favourites.

***Drink tranquil tea*** – the most popular choice seems to be chamomile tea for winding down.

***Tell yourself to slow down*** – *the times you are faced with a high stress situation are the ones in which you most need to react carefully. Dr Uhes tells his patients to “move slowly, think slowly”. You’ll move more carefully in an emergency if you tell yourself to be calm. [From my own experience, especially over the past 18 months, although I have tried, I have found this advice very difficult to do.]*

### **Remember the eight steps:**

1. Relax the muscles in your forehead. Then, relax your cheeks and jaw.
2. Focus on calming your breathing.
3. Relax your arms and drop your shoulders so you're not tensed up.
4. Imagine a warm sensation flowing from your head to your fingertips.
5. Take a deep breath and slowly exhale, relaxing your chest and your stomach.
6. Imagine you're lying in a canoe on a calm lake with nothing but a clear blue sky above you **or** that you're lying in a black velvet hammock in a pitch-black room.
7. If you find your mind distracted, try mentally repeating the words: "Don't think, don't think, don't think" for 10 seconds.
8. Practise this technique every night for six weeks.



## **The Secrets of Mental Energy with Hints to help you sleep** - Written by Editors of **Prevention Magazine Health Books**

A key element of clearer thinking is mental energy – being alert throughout the day. Refreshing yourself and maintaining your concentration is little more than a matter of understanding how your body clock functions and using quick and easy techniques for getting yourself back into sync with your own natural energy rhythms. That's the advice of the director of Health, Weight and Stress Clinic at the Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions.

According to Timothy Roehrs, of the Sleep Centre at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit, "To be more alert, get enough sleep." Sounds simple enough but how much sleep is enough? Dr Roehrs conducted a study that found that the old idea that 8 hours was good for everyone may not be so – that each person has an individual need and it's often for more than 8. To

- Although chamomile tea potentially benefits heart health in many ways, ***it may increase the risk of bleeding for people on blood thinners.***
- ***Chamomile may increase the effects of medications that prevent blood clots (anticoagulants) and sedatives (including alcohol).***
- ***Those who take cholesterol lowering drugs should avoid chamomile because it causes statins to be broken down in the liver, rendering them less effective.***

### **Which flowering plant is similar to the Chamomile?**

The flowers of scentless chamomile and Ox-eye daisy look very similar. Look at the leaves to tell them apart. Scentless chamomile leaves are so finely dissected, they might be described as feathery. Scentless chamomile can also grow taller and more bush-like than ox-eye daisy.

I would suggest, if you wish to explore the benefits and/or contra-indications of drinking Chamomile Tea, then visit a Herbalist and ask for advice.

As a child in the late forties/early fifties, my Mum would give me chamomile tea when suffering from a sore throat. I had tonsillitis a lot and many home remedies were used in those days.



### **What does chamomile symbolise?**

Chamomile flowers carry the symbolic meaning of joy, positivity, happiness, rest, peace, poise, calmness.

### **Recommendation from a Friend**

A friend recently recommended to me the herbal tea she takes that helps her to relax and have a good night's sleep. Carole is a very active lady who is always on the go but Camomile, Limeflower and Lavender Infusion, which she buys from Waitrose, really does help her to get a good night's sleep.



## My Recipe for Sleep by Sarah Richards

I have never been good at sleeping, but now at least I have developed a routine to help me at the start of the night so nowadays I get a good three hours rest, then the remainder of the night is well – sometimes just on / off other times awake for an hour or more.

The main problem is my brain – I wake in the night and start planning the next day or even the next weeks: what to cook, when to cook, how to fit that into tasks on the “to do list”, commitments and everything else that life throws out. A bit of a mine field and then there are the trips we do that play on my mind – especially if they still require some organisation.

I have always been a bad sleeper – I used to just have a mug of Horlicks when I went to bed, the soothing creamy, sugary, malty taste was very comforting. As I got older my metabolism altered and whereas I used to be able to eat and drink everything – now I just have to look at anything sweet and my weight will increase – so Horlicks had to go.



Celestial Seasonings Mug

During the afternoon I stick to herbal teas or water, and avoid any caffeine. And I don't drink much during the three hours before I go to bed.

"Make sure your shoulders are not tensed up. Drop them as low as you can and keep your arms loose by your side, including your hands and fingers."



Justin advises his viewers to imagine a warm sensation going from their heads down to their fingertips and emphasises the importance of taking a deep breath.

"Now, take a deep breath and slowly exhale, relaxing your chest, your stomach, down to your thighs, knees, legs and feet."

Next, you need to clear your mind, which Justin says can be achieved by imagining one of two scenarios.

- One – you're lying in a canoe on a calm lake with nothing but a clear blue sky above you.
- Two – you're lying in a black velvet hammock in a pitch-black room.

If you find yourself getting distracted, he advises, mentally repeating the words: "Don't think, don't think, don't think" for 10 seconds to get yourself back on track.

You're supposed to practise every night for six weeks. Apparently, 96% of people who mastered this technique are actually able to fall asleep within two minutes of shutting their eyes.

Please give the technique a try and we would be pleased to hear from you as to whether it works for you. *[Thank you to Glenn for producing the images]*

*Thank you Sarah for sharing with us how you prepare for a good night's sleep, every tip is worth a try. We welcome your ideas too for preparing for a good night's sleep*



## **The Military Sleep Method that promises to help you fall asleep in two minutes**

Written by Charlotte Daly and Rosie Stagg (2023)

You should picture yourself in one of two scenarios. A fitness expert has gone viral on TikTok after he shared a military technique that is designed to help you get to sleep within two minutes.

Justin Agustin – who has 1.9 million followers on TikTok – explains that the method, originally developed by army chiefs, was created to help soldiers fall asleep at any time and in any place.

Justin explains in his video: "This technique was developed in the military to allow soldiers to fall asleep at any time, any place, even on the battlefield when the environment is extremely uncomfortable and there's a lot of noise happening – sleep for a soldier is crucial."

Justin continues: "According to my research, this was developed mainly for fighter pilots who need 100% of their reflexes and focus, which we all know decreases with the lack of sleep."

When it comes to how the technique actually works, Justin explains: "Start by relaxing the muscles in your forehead." "Relax your eyes, your cheeks, your jaw and focus on your breathing. Now go down to your neck and your shoulders."

So now, after years of trial and error, I've come up with my own recipe for sleep. I can't promise it would work for anyone else but you may like to give it a try:

First ensure the bed is welcoming. It was back in the eighties when I discovered electric blankets. In those days most had to be switched off when you went to bed. Then I found one that could be lain on and kept on all night. This meant it could be combined with the fast-becoming fashionable duvet (in the 1970 / 80s they were referred to as continental quilts). The blanket controls were big and bulky, made (I believe) from white Bakelite but it was so much better than having to turn it off, finding the bed had cooled and not being able to turn it on again.

Now, my under electric blanket has an option to fast warm the bed. After that you can set it at various heats for sleep and it will turn off after 1 or 9 hours. With an easy access switch to pop it back on in the night if you wake up – it's ideal.

I have three sets of cotton sheets. The winter set are thick and warm, cosy for the cold nights. The summer ones are crisp and cool. Depending on the season and weather I alternate these with a "middle" pair, not too warm, not too cold.

A warm drink is always a good soothing way to help you relax. In 1989 I was working in New York and came across a herbal tea called Sleepytime. It's produced by Celestial Seasonings who have a range of herbal teas. I have not found them for sale in the regular supermarkets but occasionally I've seen them in independent shops. Now I buy in bulk (six cartons of twenty) from Amazon online. There are other companies that produce tea aimed to aid sleep but Sleepytime, and Sleepytime Extra, suit my taste buds. They contain chamomile (well known for relaxing) plus spearmint and



Sleepytime Tea from Celestial Seasonings

lemongrass. The Extra has, in addition, valerian which aids sleep



Insulated Mug with Lid

I make the tea using one teabag in a good insulated mug with boiling water using just under 200 ml ( $\frac{1}{3}$  pint). The mug has a tight lid which keeps it hot while it's brewing.

Once that's made and placed by my bed (lid on) I prepare for bed. I do have a habit of checking my e-mails before I lie down, but keep it to a minimum and try not to get distracted – it's not good to

view computers, tablets or mobile phones too close to shut eye. I have my phone set to 'do not disturb' but with exceptions for close family members. This works well as some companies have a bad habit of sending out information texts in the middle of the night. It doesn't always work though as one of my brothers texted me one night at midnight. I had to check it just in case there was a problem – there wasn't and I requested emergency texts only after 10pm.

To start my relaxation, I take the lid off my tea, and set it aside. I have a kindle which I prefer to read rather than hard or paperback books. It stays flat on the pillow and I can alter the font size and brightness to suit. One disadvantage is that if I know I have nearly finished reading the book I try not to end up with having to select a new one. When I am nearing the end I set the kindle to tell me how long I have left to complete the book but this is often inaccurate. A lot of kindle books have a "taster" chapter for the next book by the author. All good promotional stuff but I have, in the past, thought I had 15 minutes to read (just long enough to lull me off to sleep) and then found the book ends after five. Starting a new book is not a relaxing task when I'm finally dozing off!

The tea usually takes ten minutes to cool down, by this time it is fully infused. I drink it then, about ten minutes later, visit the bathroom – just in case – so all being well I'm not up in the night.



Essential Oils Roller Ball

After I get back to the bedroom I open a window, just a bit to let in fresh air, use some hand cream and also dab some fragrant oil on my wrists, lavender is well known to help and I have found some roller oils that are great. When I lie in bed I can smell the perfume. The brand I use is Aroma Home but there are others.



Soft Foam Ear Plugs

With the blanket turned down low I read for a further 15 minutes or usually less as I often find that I'm reading the same page again and again. So at that point I have a sip of water, put the kindle by the bedside, plug in ear plugs and turn the light off. I use a mug for my water – a Sleepytime special which is very sturdy and not likely to topple over if I need a sip in the night. Having achieved total

relaxation I invariably fall asleep immediately. The ear plugs I use are soft foam that can be washed each morning and dry quickly, I dislike the wax kind. Mine are said to block noise to 33 decibels – blocking out the noise from outside traffic. Of course, they don't block tinnitus sounds but although I do hear them my mind is on the story of my book and I am able to brush over it.

Usually I sleep for three hours then I wake up. Sometimes I fall straight back to sleep – sometimes it's elusive. If that's the case then in the winter I switch the bed on low (by this time it will have turned off) and this normally provides that extra level of comfort and I nod off again.