

Thrive 365

Dragonfly: Impact Education



Did you know?

There's a secure evidence base now which tells us that the relationship between sleep and mental health is bi-directional [1]. This means that a lack of good quality sleep can have a negative impact on your mental health, but likewise, poor mental health can negatively impact your sleep.

Good sleep increases our capacity to cope with the challenges of everyday life. But what can we do to help ourselves when sleep seems elusive? And, bearing in mind the link between disturbed sleep and emotional and behavioural difficulties [2] how can parents help their children?

[1] <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/mental-health>

[2] Kortesoja et al (2020) <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-020-01203-3>

1 Sleep education

Knowing the benefits of sleep is an important motivating factor in making sleep a priority. Many people think that your brain 'switches off' during sleep but this isn't the case. Different areas of the brain become active during different stages of sleep.

No one is sure exactly what goes on in the brain during sleep yet, but we do know that it reduces stress, improves balance, supports the immune system and helps you to maintain a healthy weight. It also helps memory and higher functioning such as decision making and planning, and helps you to process emotional information from the day.

2 Sleep hygiene

Sleep hygiene means adopting lifestyle choices and habits that promote healthy sleep.

Making sure you've had exercise during the day can help. Make sure that the room isn't too warm and that it is dark enough. Certain foods have a stimulating effect such as caffeine or fatty foods, so these are best avoided in the evening. Blue light also signals to the body that it's daytime, so screen free time an hour or so before bed helps you to wind down, as does dimming the lights and having the same routine each night, so that your body starts to become accustomed to the cues that it's almost time to sleep.

3 Seek help

It's important to acknowledge that sometimes, people follow all the necessary steps to promote good sleep but still find it hard to get a good night. This can be incredibly frustrating and distressing.

There is support available for those who find lack of sleep is impacting their quality of life. The GP is often the first port of call. A type of counselling known as CBT-I (CBT for insomnia) has a good track record of helping people with sleep problems. The sleep charity is also a useful resource and they offer courses and provide a helpline. You can find them here: <https://thesleepcharity.org.uk/>

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