GOODNIGHT
HUSKIES

A Bedtime Companion for College Students
In a college student’s room, there was a laptop and some textbooks and a view of the UW Tower shining beneath the moon...

This booklet is about healthy sleep habits and skills you can use to increase your chances for a restful night of sleep. These skills can be used in college and beyond to establish effective sleep routines and increase sleep quality.

Sleep can be improved with skills, practice, and intention. Check off the strategies in this booklet you will try!

This booklet is brought to you by LiveWell’s Peer Health Educators.

UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

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Goodnight Instagram, goodnight homework...

“What’s the big deal about sleep?”

Sleep is essential for survival, health, and productivity and takes up more time than any other single activity. When you get the quality of sleep you need, you….

**Study smarter.**

Sleep sharpens concentration, solidifies memory, and improves brain performance. Students who get the recommended 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night do better academically.

**Boost your mood.**

Sleep restores the body and helps our ability to manage stress, irritability, and feelings of depression and anxiety.

**Battle sickness.**

Sleep improves the body’s ability to fight off colds, flu, and other illnesses.

**Avoid weight gain.**

Lack of sleep weakens communication between your brain and stomach, making you more likely to overeat. We also know there is a link between not sleeping enough and gaining weight.

**Stay awake & alert!**

More sleep = less daytime sleepiness (no more snoozing through class!)

*Sleep is a big deal because it enhances overall physical, mental and emotional health. It is pivotal to our academic and social balance.*
Tips for Getting a Restful Night of Sleep

Read through these and check-off which might work for you!

Pause your thoughts.

Make a to-do list for the next day before going to bed. Doing this can quiet your thoughts and prepare you for a restful night’s sleep. Keep a notepad by your bed to write down things you need to do or remember. Simply jotting things down can relax your mind!

☐ Make tomorrow’s to-do list before bed.

☐ Keep a bedside notepad to write down any thoughts or worries.

Snack lightly or not at all.

Light snacks before bedtime are OK, but avoid heavy meals since digestion prevents the body from relaxing into sleep. Pretzels, fruit, and yogurt are all good options. Warm milk, bananas, and other foods high in tryptophan stimulate serotonin in the brain and can help with sleep. Avoid alcohol and caffeine consumption before bedtime as it will interfere with normal sleep patterns.

☐ Finish eating a few hours before bed.

☐ Stick to light and unprocessed snacks like fruit or yogurt before bed if you need one.

Make sure to eat enough throughout the day & drink water.

If we are going to bed hungry or our body is dehydrated because we haven’t had enough water to drink, this can be a cause for poor sleep. If we have eaten regular and nutritious meals, and drank enough water, our bodies are more prepared to sleep peacefully through the night.

☐ Remember to eat enough nutritious food every day.

☐ Make sure to drink the necessary amount of water for my body.
Consider your caffeine intake.

Drinking too much caffeine during the day can affect sleep patterns at night. Caffeine is an ingredient in many coffee drinks, diet sodas, iced tea, and pain-relieving drugs like Excedrin. It also can cause and/or exacerbate anxiety in high amounts.

☐ Stop drinking caffeine 5 to 6 hours before going to bed (8-10 if sensitive to caffeine).

☐ Drink decaffeinated coffee or herbal tea in the afternoon.

Did You Know?

Dietary Supplements, Energy Drinks, and Caffeine Pills are not regulated by the Food & Drug Administration (FDA).

If you are considering using one of the above for either energy or relaxation, be aware that the ingredients (and marketing claims) of these are not regulated by the FDA. It has been found through third-party testing that there are often ingredients in these products that are not listed on the label. If you choose to use one of these, do your research and try to use products that have third party testing to verify ingredients, as well as research on the research behind what they claim the product does.

Caffeine can be dangerous for some people (talk to a medical professional) and also can have negative consequences in high amounts.

Similar to alcohol, we encourage people to consume caffeine slowly and to be aware of the amount you are consuming to prevent unwanted consequences.

Drinking caffeine in high amounts for a long period of time can cause an imbalance of chemicals in the body that cause negative physical and mental health effects. Caffeine consumption can cause and/or exacerbate mental health symptoms such as anxiety and depression.

Get yourself in the mood.

Stop studying 30-60 minutes before bed and do something relaxing or enjoyable. Our brains and nervous system need time to transition from intensive focused work to being able to relax into sleep.

☐ Give myself at least 30-60 minutes of downtime before bed.
Shut off screens.

Light from phones, tablets, TVs, and computers suppresses the hormone in the brain that tells you to sleep. Avoid using these devices at least 30-60 minutes before going to bed.

☐ Disconnect myself from bright screens 30-60 minutes before bed (including phone!).

Create a sleep schedule.

Developing a routine before bed cues your body that it’s time to sleep. A healthy routine may include reading, stretching, or listening to music. It’s also important to go to bed and get up at the same time every day (even on weekends!). If that’s not possible, extend your ‘awake time’ by no more than a few hours and get up as close to your normal schedule as possible.

☐ Set an alarm to tell me to go to sleep.

Good time management skills and not over-committing yourself can help you sleep! Reduce stress & increase sleep by planning ahead, setting personal deadlines, and prioritizing what you can and want to do (say no to things when your plate is full).

Stay active & move your body.

Exercise helps you sleep longer and sounder and makes you more alert throughout the day. Make it a priority to get at least 30 minutes of exercise each day. But if you go to the gym, don’t work out within 3 hours of going to bed – this can interfere with your sleep. When our bodies are sitting and studying for hours on end, it increases muscle tension which also can interfere with a good night’s sleep.

☐ When studying, get up every 30-60 minutes and take a short walk or stretch.

☐ Do some stretching or light yoga before bed.

☐ Skip the bus and walk to class.

☐ Get to the gym or outside at least ____ time(s) per week.
If you can’t fall asleep, take a break.

Don’t stay in bed trying to sleep if you find yourself tossing and turning. If you can't fall asleep within 15 to 30 minutes, get out of bed and read a book or do another relaxing activity.

☐ Get out of bed and do something relaxing if I can’t fall asleep (still no screens).

Use your bed only for sleep and sex.

To strengthen the association between bed and slumber, don’t eat, go online, do homework, or use your phone extensively in bed. Organize your room so that you can study and sleep in different areas.

☐ Study and socialize somewhere other than my bed.

Get comfortable.

Make sure your room is cool, dark, quiet, and comfortable. Use a sleep mask, ear plugs, or ‘white noise’ from a fan to create this atmosphere if you can’t control it yourself.

☐ Use ear plugs, a sleep mask, blinds/curtains, and ‘white noise’ to foster sleep.

Turn off the clock.

Watching the time tick can keep you awake. If you have a clock, turn it away so you can’t see it. If you use your phone, put it somewhere inconvenient to reach. Focus on relaxing your mind instead of stressing about the time.

☐ Put my phone and/or clock somewhere I can’t easily see it.

Believe you can sleep (or fake it until you make it).

Oftentimes we stress so much about not being able to sleep, we end up repeating to ourselves negative affirmations and thoughts about poor sleep and in our inability to sleep before we even crawl into bed. Cultivate internal awareness to notice when these thoughts and fears occur, and gently repeat to yourself affirmations that support you getting a restful night of sleep. Remember that our bodies are made to sleep and want to sleep, and be compassionate and patient with yourself when you are struggling with sleep.

☐ Use affirmations and self-talk that are encouraging of my capacity to sleep well.

☐ Be patient and compassionate with myself when I am struggling to sleep or rest.
**Did You Know?**

The less you sleep the more you tend to gain weight.

Leptin is a hormone that affects our feelings of fullness and satisfaction after a meal. Ghrelin is the hormone that stimulates our appetites. When we are sleep deprived, our levels of leptin fall while ghrelin levels increase. This means that we end up feeling hungrier without really feeling satisfied by what we eat, causing us to eat more and consequently gain weight.

**Females need more sleep than males.**

Research has shown that females need more sleep than males, and often experience lighter sleep that can be more easily disrupted. A combination of hormonal and biological differences, as well as social-cultural differences, are attributed to this difference.

**Disruptive sleep can be a symptom and/or a root cause of mental health issues like anxiety and depression.**

For some people, disrupted sleep and issues with sleep can be symptoms of a mental health issue, and for others, it can be a cause. When we are not getting the sleep we need, it causes imbalances in the physical body which then can impact our psychological well-being. Talk to a medical or psychological provider who specializes in sleep to learn more.
SMELL your way to SLEEP

Aromatherapy is often used to reduce stress and foster sleep. Research suggests that aromatics have significant effects on the body even when you’re not aware of them (like during sleep)! 1

Essential oils have become popular in recent years, although they have been used in cultures throughout the world for thousands of years. If you use an essential oil, be sure to check out the company for third party testing and ingredient lists, as they are not regulated by the Food & Drug Administration and some companies have been found to be using artificial fragrances and chemicals, as well as other additives not listed on the label.

Similar to other forms of therapy, aromatherapy has the strongest impact when it’s specific to you and what you need. There is no one size fits all. Our sense of smell is the quickest way memories are activated in our brain, so smells can have pleasing or uncomfortable impacts for us based on memories that may be associated with them. Lavender and Jasmine are commonly reported as soothing and calming for many people, and yet you may have a different smell that is relaxing for you- use what works for you!

For the Love of Lavender:

1. It contains oils that have sedating effects that relax muscles.
2. It has slight soothing and calming effects when inhaled.

Not all Smells are Equal

Did you know? The scents found in most candles, perfumes, room/car fresheners, and bath/body products (soap, shampoo, etc) are made of synthetic chemicals.

Many synthetic chemicals in fragrances are derived from petrochemicals (petroleum-based), and can be harmful to human health and the environment. Chemicals found in man-made fragrances include phthalates, which are endocrine disruptors, and benzene derivatives, aldehydes, and toluene, which are known carcinogens. Some fragrance compounds are neurotoxicants and others are linked with reproductive birth defects. In addition, some people have allergic or hypersensitivity reactions to fragrance chemicals. Allergic and asthmatic people are at especially high risk.

Common symptoms of allergy response to artificial fragrances are: headaches, difficulty breathing, nausea, skin irritation/rashes, and nose/eye allergic responses.
To Nap or Not to Nap?

Research shows that long naps in the late afternoon or early evening reduce sleep quality. However, brief naps in the early afternoon can increase alertness.

**Power Naps Best:**

Sleep for just 30min so that you don’t enter deep (REM) sleep

*If you need a longer nap, limit yourself to 90min so that your body follows its natural sleep/wake cycle*

The Impact of Alcohol on Sleep

It takes a minimum of 3 days for the body to recover from a night of heavy drinking. Alcohol intoxication interferes with REM – the deep sleep stage needed to feel rested and refreshed. Here’s a breakdown of what might happen after a night of heavy drinking:

**Saturday night** – You go to bed intoxicated. Although you sleep 10 hours, your brain doesn’t enter the REM stage, or enters it during the final few hours of sleep. You wake up feeling tired and sluggish.

**Sunday night** – You have no intention of going out and instead plan to ‘catch up’ on sleep. But tonight your sleep-deprived brain enters REM REBOUND, staying too long in the REM stage. Again, you wake up feeling tired and struggle to focus on studying for Monday’s mid-term.

**Monday night** – Finally, your brain returns to a normal sleep cycle. You wake up on Tuesday feeling rested and refreshed. But it’s a bit too late for your exam!

**Remember that after a night of heavy drinking, when you awake you most likely still have alcohol in your bloodstream (so your BAC is still above zero). To learn more about BAC and Alcohol, attend one of LiveWell’s Peer Health Educator Alcohol Education workshops, or take E-CheckUp on the LiveWell website (all free to UW-Seattle Students).**
Dreaming

is connected to bursts of electrical activity in the brain stem every 90 minutes during deep sleep. Over a lifetime, an average person can spend more than 6 years dreaming!

Some people dream more than others, and we all have different abilities to recall or remember our dreams upon waking. Some people dream in color or black & white; some dream in one or multiple languages. Various cultures, spiritual traditions, and academic fields have different interpretations and values on what dreams are and what they mean.

You decide what your dreams mean, if anything, to you based on your own life experiences and knowledge of self. For some people, dreams are just random things happening in the body and brain. For others, it can be a way to reflect on one's internal well-being, dive into spiritual reflection, or check-in with your state of stress/ease in life.

How to Keep a Dream Journal

There are many ways of course, but here is one to get you started if you want to do so:

1. As soon as you wake up, write down or draw the first images and words that come to mind. Don’t try to interpret, just write!
2. Circle the symbols or words on the page that are important to you.
3. Think about what these might represent. What insights or inspirations do they provide?
4. Ask each symbol, “who are you and why are you in my dream?”
   Write down the first response that comes to mind, even if it doesn’t make sense!
5. Keep working with the symbol until its importance or meaning is more clear to you.
Bad dreams, Nightmares, Night Terrors & Stress:

It is common for us to have frightening, bad, or stressful dreams. During times of stress, these bad dreams can increase. A relatable example is when you have a big test coming up, and you have dreams of missing or failing your test. Often our bad dreams are related to current fears and stressors that we are trying to manage.

Nightmares are dreams with explicit and unsettling content. They are most likely to occur during REM sleep, making them more common in late night and early-morning hours if you are on a regular sleep cycle. Oftentimes we will awake during a nightmare or have a vivid recall of it upon waking. A nightmare every now and then can be common. Night terrors are often more difficult for a person to recall, and can include shouting, sleepwalking, or being unsettled in sleep. Night terrors are not recalled in vivid detail usually, and it’s less common to wake-up completely from them, making them different from nightmares. Many times adults don’t know they are having them unless they sleep or live with others who are awoken by the night terror and tell them the morning after. Night terrors are more common in kids, but can still occur in adults.

* If you are having ongoing nightmares or night terrors that are impairing your sleep and health, or nightmares that are connected to traumatic and life-threatening experiences you’ve had, a psychological, spiritual, or medical professional who specializes in sleep and trauma recovery may be helpful to you. There are many non-pharmaceutical ways to decrease nightmares and improve sleep, as well as prescribed medications- seek out various opinions and find the support that is right for you.

TIPS and tricks for managing these:

Develop a soothing and effective sleep routine that gets your mind and body as relaxed as possible before sleep; follow previous tips on managing stress and engaging in self-care for better sleep, and use the below tips for highly distressing dreams and nightmares:

- Orient yourself to where you are using your senses

  When you awake startled or frightened, remind yourself “I am safe at home; that dream wasn’t real.” Use your senses like touch and sight to remind yourself where you are. Keep soothing objects near the bed you can touch, or feel the texture of your bed linens. Keep a water bottle nearby and take a sip of water.

- Take deep, calming breaths to calm the nervous system

  Often we awake from a nightmare or bad dream with our nervous system in a stress-response state with crying, near tears, yelling, breathing hard, etc. Let yourself cry if you need to, as it helps your body move through the stress response and return to a calmer state more quickly. Take deep breaths and focus on feeling
the air move in and out of your lungs. Putting a hand on your chest on the sternum bone can be calming to some, or curling into a ball - do what calms your body.

☐ Write or talk out the dream

Some find it helpful to write out the bad dream (for others this makes it worse - feel out what works for you). If you have a partner in bed who awoke with you, you could talk it out, or simply ask them for what you need to feel calm, present, and safe.

☐ Re-envision the ending (Imagery Rehearsal)

If you are having a repeating theme in your dream or nightmare, spend time writing and imagining a different ending to the dream when awake. This can be helpful in shifting the content of the dream and/or building consciousness into the dream when it happens that it’s not real. Psychological therapists, apps, and books all offer tools and in-depth ways to practice imagery rehearsal if you want more guidance.

☐ Be intentional about the content of media you are consuming

Be conscious of what types of media you are consuming throughout the day, as it may be impacting your dreams and/or nightmares. Television, news, Instagram, and other forms of media influence our levels of stress, and can also impact our dreams. If you are consuming high amounts of media with disturbing content, it could be correlated to increased distress while sleeping; watch for connections for yourself and adjust as needed for more peaceful sleep.
Exam Time Do’s & Don’ts

**Do** get some sleep and avoid pulling an all-nighter.
- Your brain needs sleep in order to process and retain information.

**Do** talk to your roommate about your finals week sleep schedule.
- Plan to be especially respectful of each other’s sleep during this week.

**Do** exercise & take breaks in between study sessions.
- Physical activity relieves stress, keeps you alert, and helps with sleep.

**Don’t** use the computer or phone right before bedtime.
- Screens suppress sleep hormones and make it more difficult to sleep.

**Don’t** skip meals.
- Eating regular and nutritious meals helps the brain focus, concentrate, and memorize - and it is necessary for restful sleep.
My Sleep Goals

Take a moment to write down 3 sleep goals you have for yourself:

1. _________________________________________

2. _________________________________________

3. _________________________________________

How do you know when you are getting tired and your body wants to sleep? Reflect on what signals your body sends. Often when stressed we ignore these signals, and practicing mindfulness means learning to listen and respond to our body’s signals for rest, balance, and other needs.

What are the situations, environments, and behaviors that lead you to get the best sleep? Reflect on times when you’ve felt rested and like you are sleeping well - what are some of the themes that may have contributed to those times?

**Remember,** getting restful sleep takes effort and intentional choice. It may mean prioritizing sleep over spending an extra hour socializing or doing something else. It is common to go through periods of great sleep, and fitful sleep, as life ebbs and flows. **You’ve got this Husky!**
LiveWell Resources

UW LiveWell – Center for Student Advocacy, Training & Education

Get tips and information on a spectrum of health and wellness topics from our FREE weekly E-magazine, Healthy Huskies, at livewellhuskies.com.

Sign up to attend our Sleepy Husky workshop with UW Peer Health Educators: check our website for upcoming dates/times. (Have a group? Request your own workshop).

Make a peer health educator wellness coaching appointment with our Peer Health Educators via the LiveWell website to discuss sleep strategies in a peer one-on-one.

Visit livewell.uw.edu to learn more about our other FREE services for students:

Survivor Support and Advocacy - Confidential Advocacy is a safe and confidential place for UW students to receive support and advocacy after an incident of sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking or sexual harassment.

Student Care Coordinators support students who may be struggling and in need of multiple resources. Examples include housing and/or food insecurity, death or serious illness in the family, navigating University processes and departments, including Financial Aid, Student Fiscal Services, Residential Life, Registrar’s Office and others, connections to on- and- off- campus resources like Disability Resources for Students and counseling.

The National Sleep Foundation has numerous resources for sleep health http://www.sleepfoundation.org

The following is adapted from materials prepared by University of New Hampshire Health Services, Campus Health Services at the University of Arizona, and Boston University Health Services, with additional content added by LiveWell Staff at University of Washington.

1. WJU Professor and Students Find Jasmine Odor Leads to More Restful Sleep, Decreased Anxiety and Greater Mental Performance, Wheeling Jesuit University; http://www.wju.edu/about/adm_news_story.asp?NewsID=539
3. Lavender, University of Maryland Medical Center; http://www.umm.edu/altmed/articles/lavender-000260.htm
4. Children’s Environmental Health Network - FAQs: Fragrances
5. Feinberg et al., 1985; Karacan, Williams, Finley, & Hursch, 1970; Werth, Dijk, Acherman, & Borberly, 1996; Bonnet & Arand, 1994