

“Sleep is the best meditation.”

Dalai Lama



Introduction to this week's activity

In this activity, we introduce you to the science of sleep and the role Mindfulness can play in helping us to develop an healthy sleep routine. Science shows us that there is a close relationship between sleep and mental health. Living with stress and anxiety – and particularly so during these uncertain, challenging times - can affect how well we sleep. Equally, poor sleep can have a negative impact on our mental health and wellbeing.

We all know that a nutritious diet and physical exercise are essential ingredients of good health. Yet perhaps we don't realise just how important sleep is for both our mental and physical health. When we are sleep deprived it means that we don't perform to our full potential - whether it's in school, on the sports field or in terms of physical and emotional health. We can influence our own ability to get a good night's sleep in powerful ways and by developing an healthy evening routine we can all experience the benefits this provides.

Discover and Discuss

Your first task this week is to present a case to your local council on the following topic:

As secondary school pupils, our biological clock means that our natural sleeping time is around 1 to 2 hours later than primary school children. Our school's current start time disrupts our natural body rhythm and in order to keep us healthy we propose that lessons begin at 10.00 a.m. each day.

Your teacher will assign you to a group presenting the case either in favour of the above, or the case against.

Here are a selection of information resources that will help you prepare your case.



The Case For and Against beginning the School Day at 10.00 a.m.: Information Resources

Videos:

How do teenagers sleep differently? (Matthew Walker, Professor of Neuroscience and Psychology at the University of California, Berkeley)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wnzDODyapbY> (2.31 mins)

How can sleep affect a teenager's education (Matthew Walker)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jB1Wcmvyl8M> (1.14 mins)

A walk through the stages of sleep (Matthew Walker)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eM2VWspRpfk&list=PLOGi5-fAu8bGQzXikzslm-IKaSujo6sfy> (4.47 mins)

Hacking your memory - with sleep (Matthew Walker)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6TyIY6u31gk&list=PLOGi5-fAu8bGQzXikzslm-IKaSujo6sfy&index=3> (4.42 mins)

How sleep affects your emotions (Matthew Walker)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6F8wFkScnME&list=PLOGi5-fAu8bGQzXikzslm-IKaSujo6sfy&index=5> (3.40 mins)

Readings:

MPs to debate late school starts for teenagers (2019)

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-47138248>

Teenagers' health is better with later school start (2017)

<http://www.open.ac.uk/research/news/teenagers-health-better-later-school-start>

The body-clock science behind later school start times (2019)

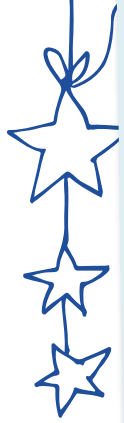
<https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20191023-the-body-clock-science-behind-later-school-start-times>

Should teens start later to boost concentration? (2019)

<https://www.itv.com/news/anglia/2019-02-11/should-teens-start-school-later-to-boost-concentration>

THE CASE FOR A
10.00 A.M. START

THE CASE AGAINST
A 10.00 A.M. START



Home Learning Activity

As we are learning, a lack of sleep affects both our physical and mental health - this is why, for example, many professional athletes make a point of getting lots of sleep each night to ensure that they perform to the very best of their ability. **Did you know that Roger Federer sleeps for an average of 12 hours per night?**

Usain Bolt and Venus Williams sleep up to 10 hours per night.⁶

WOW!

There can be lots of reasons that we don't get enough sleep - doing homework, completing assessments, checking Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, watching a favourite programme, catching up with friends and family on Facetime, Zoom and so on. For teenagers, the NHS recommends a good night's sleep of 8 to 9 hours and we'd like you to try and achieve this each night during this week to see how it makes you feel.

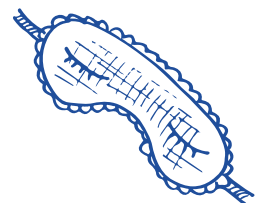
Contrary to what we might think, science shows us that getting a good night's sleep doesn't begin at the moment you jump into bed and close your eyes. Your sleep environment and what you do in the evening send powerful messages to your brain about whether or not you should go to sleep⁸. Improving your sleep environment and sleep routine can help send a strong message to your brain that 'now is the time to sleep'.



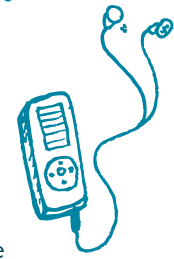
In order to set yourself up for a good 8 to 9 hours sleep, here are a few tips to think about:

Create a Sleep-friendly Environment

- Your bedroom - if you have a phone, tablet, computer / laptop or TV in your room make sure the screens are turned off - remember that a lit screen sends a message via the retina at the back of our eyes to the portion of the brain that controls the body's internal biological clock - the message being it's not night or time to sleep yet! Make sure that you have a least 30 minutes of screen-free time before going to sleep.
- As far as you can, try to make your room as dark as possible, cool and quiet - when a room is the opposite of this and it's too light, hot and noisy is certainly not going to help you sleep well!

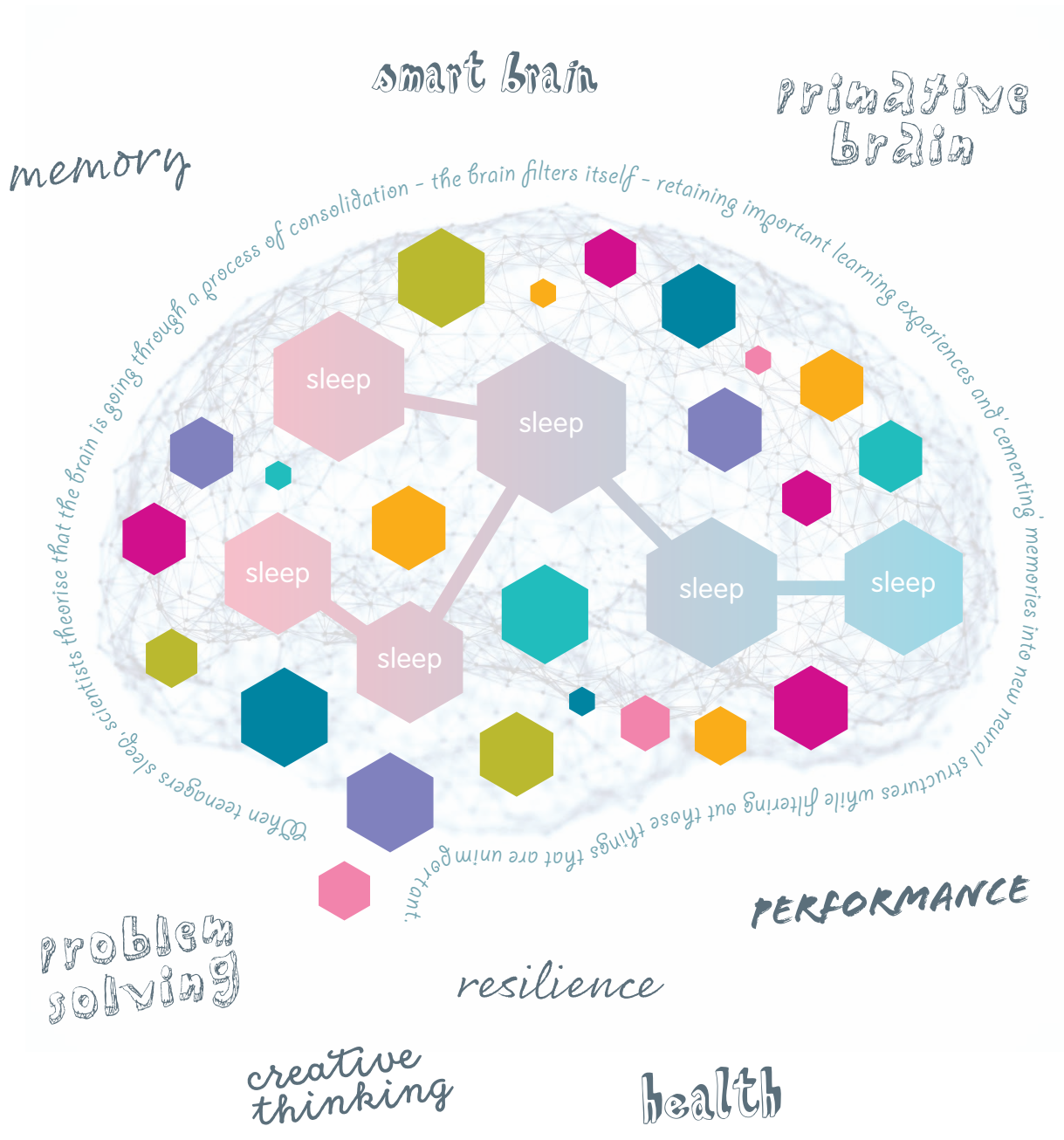


...create your own Mindfulness 'Nodcast' to listen to each night.



Create a Sleep-friendly Routine

- Have a consistent sleep schedule - try to go to bed at the same time and wake up at the same time. At the weekend try not to stay up too late or sleep in for longer than one hour in the morning. The more irregular your sleep routine the more you confuse your brain about when it's time to go to sleep.
- Try to begin 'winding down' about an hour before bedtime - during this time avoid studying, watching TV, using your phone, tablet, laptop, or other activities that might be over-stimulating for your brain such as gaming. Do something instead that doesn't involve using a lit screen - for example, have a relaxing bath or shower, read a book, listen to relaxing (of course!) music.
- In order to quiet your brain and relax your body once you get into bed, we'd like you to create your own Mindfulness 'Nodcast' to listen to each night.



It's hard to relax when our minds are still full of thoughts about the day's events or thinking about all we have to do tomorrow - the mind's tendency to get caught up in thoughts and mental chatter is perhaps strongest at bedtime. Research has shown that Mindfulness practice and listening to soothing sounds or music can quiet our minds and help us to let go of restless thoughts before we go to sleep.

A Mindfulness Nodcast can be a natural aid helping us to fall asleep more quickly and once asleep to sleep in a more restful and restorative way. Your Nodcast should be at least 10 minutes long (audio only, of course!) - but it can be up to 30 minutes if you find this helpful. You can experiment during the week to find what Mindfulness practice, sounds and time length work best for you in calming your mind and soothing your body to sleep. Your Mindfulness Nodcast can be a mix - for example, it could begin with the night time body scan practice and then be followed with a short bedtime story, or a favourite relaxing piece of music, or your chosen sounds from nature. Not everyone's Nodcast will be the same and there is no right or wrong practice here - it's your personal choice about what you find relaxing, calming and helps you transition into restful sleep.

Check out the following links for Nodcast ideas. You do not have to use any of the ideas below for your Mindfulness Nodcast - be creative and make your own audio! Just a couple of things to remember - your Nodcast is audio only, it shouldn't involve having to look at a lit screen (for all the reasons highlighted above we already know that lit screens and sleep are incompatible!) and whatever music or sounds you use they must, of course, be soothing leaving you feeling calm, relaxed and ready to sleep.



Breathing Space Meditation: Night Time Body Scan (3.21 mins)

<https://vimeo.com/351423795>

Try to keep a diary of your sleep patterns during this week - this will help you to remember what worked best for you - notice especially those Mindfulness Nodcasts that helped you drift off to sleep before you got to the end!

Wind down, Switch Off (Headspace)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3o9etQktCpl> (1.24 mins)

Stephen Fry's Bedtime Story: Blue Gold (Calm)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5mGifCwig8I> (24.38 mins)

Sleepcast: Beachcomber (Headspace)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=soQJrB732xM> (10 mins)

Sleepcast: Downriver (Headspace)

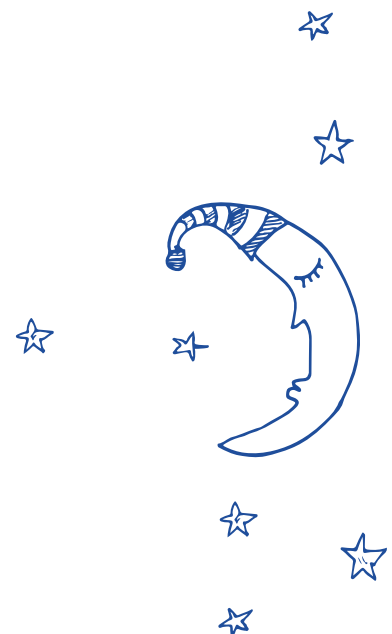
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1q-6d28M0dg> (10 mins)

Rainstorm Sounds

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yIQd2YaOZiw>

Flowing River and Bird Song Sounds

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eKFTSSKcZWA>



Day 1

Good
night

Day 2

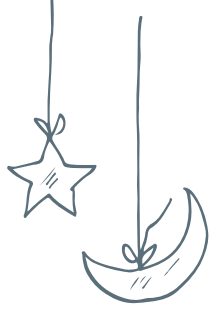
Day 3

Day 4

Day 5

Day 6

Day 7



Reconnect and Reflect

Reflect on what you've learned this week about getting a good night's sleep. Think about your experiences – what worked and what didn't work for you – for example, in relation to:

- The ways in which you tried to create a sleep-friendly environment?

- The ways in which you created a sleep-friendly routine?

- Your Mindfulness Nodcast - types of practice, music and sounds included, length of audio and so on?

- Do you think you're commitment to the new sleep environment, routine and Mindfulness Nodcast helped you to sleep better?



...zzz



- If you managed to get the recommended amount of sleep each night what benefits do you think it had? (Circle any of these).

Not as tired
during the day

More
energy

Body feels stronger
and less fatigued

Mood is less
irritable and
grumpy

Easier to
remember
things

Better able to
concentrate
on lessons

Better at focussing
in sports activities

Less anxious
and stressed

Better able to cope
with problems

- If you didn't manage to get the recommended amount of sleep each night why do you think this was and what might you do to change this?

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- Any other thoughts on what you've learned from your sleep experience this week, things that were important to you or surprised you?

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“Take good care of your sleep and



your sleep will take good care of you”

Our Do-BeMindful message for this week

Sleep is like health food for our brain and body - it nourishes and restores us, allowing us to perform at our best in our daily lives - academically, physically and emotionally. Developing a Mindful sleep routine each evening can help us to fall asleep more quickly and achieve the quality of sleep we need to benefit our health.

In the words of Dr Dzung Vo¹:

“Take good care of your sleep and your sleep will take good care of you.”

¹ Dr Dzung Vo (2015) The Mindful Teen, New Harbinger Publications