Sleep is your life support system, allowing your body to repair and recharge. It can boost your immune system, regulate your metabolism, aid digestion and lower your blood pressure. It is even linked to life expectancy.

What is less well known is how sleep benefits our minds. Deep-NREM sleep is important for memory and learning, filing away the day’s memories in long term storage. Lighter REM sleep may play a role in emotional intelligence, giving your mind time to make sense of and process experiences and emotions better.

Sleep is nature’s best strategy for mental and physical success – and what’s more, it’s free.

Humans need two different kinds of sleep: NREM sleep, in which our minds shut down, and do deep processing and repair work, and REM sleep, in which we dream.

If you can’t sleep, try not to lose sleep over it. That includes worrying about getting to sleep!

That is your body telling you it’s not ready to sleep. It’s a gentle reminder to count down to the time you want to sleep, and wake up at that time.

What stops you sleeping?

If you’re having trouble sleeping, making sure you’re not too hot or too cold can help, so aim for silence or familiar sounds, then try again later.

Unexpected noises will disturb your sleep, so try warm baths to relax your mind and help you unwind. Do something relaxing, like reading, watching relaxing TV or listening to your mind and sleep like clockwork.

To improve your sleep, you need to understand your sleeping and waking cycle. Your nightly routine is still very important - so you feel sleepy at bedtime, and more alert in the day.

What helps you sleep?

Many of the things that help you sleep happen during the day. When you get plenty of daylight, this regulates your circadian rhythm and helps you sleep better at night. Getting enough sleep early in the day can help get your system going, reduce stress and help you relax at bedtime.

A good routine around eating and drinking is also important. Sleep and appetite are connected, and you can regulate your body clock by eating regular meals. Staying hydrated through the day can also help you feel more awake, and improve your wellbeing.

Your nightly routine is still very important. In the hour or so before bed, try to do things that relax your mind and help you wind down, like reading, watching relaxing TV or having a hot bath. Get your mind and body ready for sleep, and make a habit of it.

Handling stress and worry can help you sleep. Many of the things that help you sleep happen during the day. Getting enough sleep early in the day can help get your system going, reduce stress and help you relax at bedtime. Taking exercise early in the day can help you feel more awake, and improve your wellbeing.

Good habits are the key to healthy sleep: train your body to sleep and wake like clockwork.

So if you’re not really feeling sleepy, and your bedroom is dark and quiet, then try again later. You might not sleep as well.

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