

# Sleep: Your Productivity Superpower

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Feeling a bit fatigued? Pouring yourself another cup of coffee at this very moment? Don't worry; we have exactly what you're looking for right here. Today, we will explore the fascinating connection between sleep and overall well-being, with a focus on how sleep affects your brain health. Hang with us, and you'll be waking up refreshed, motivated and productive.

It's no secret that a good night's sleep leaves us feeling refreshed, but its impact on our overall well-being goes much deeper. Studies have shown that inadequate sleep can have severe consequences for our physical and mental health.

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[The Institute of Medicine](#) explains, "After decades of research, the case can be confidently made that sleep loss and sleep disorders have profound and widespread effects on human health."

Yet, according to an [HBR](#) article, "an [international study](#) conducted in 2017 by the Center for Creative Leadership found that among leaders [...] 42% get six or fewer hours of shut-eye a night."

Meet Amy, a working professional who, up until a few years ago, was burning the midnight oil, thinking it was the path to success. She felt anxious and her focus was fading. It wasn't until she prioritised her sleep that she realised how essential it was for her well-being.

Do you see yourself in this scene? Amy's story echoes the findings of numerous studies linking sleep deprivation to mood disorders, decreased cognitive function, and an increased risk of chronic diseases. It's during deep sleep that the brain processes emotions and experiences, so sleep plays a crucial role in mental health.

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Thankfully, there are ways to optimise your sleep and reap its many benefits. Let's delve into some strategies that can help you achieve better sleep. According to the Mayo Clinic, people should "[maintain a steady sleep schedule, limit screen time before bed, limit caffeine and alcohol intake, exercise regularly, and watch their diet](#)". Here's another case study to help you visualise!

John, a father of two, is balancing work and family life, and it is leaving him sleep-deprived. He goes to bed at inconsistent times and often needs an alcoholic drink or two to unwind

every night. The stress in his life never feels dealt with during the day, and he struggles to fall asleep.

John figured that he needed a change of routine. He began exercising daily, and never after six in the evening. He found that he was more motivated to cut out alcohol because of his improved health habits, and he was more sleepy at a consistent hour. Establishing a regular sleep schedule and creating a comfortable sleep environment made a world of difference in his quality of sleep—and now he is more able to combat the stresses in his life from a place of rest. John's experience highlights the importance of a consistent sleep routine and a conducive sleep environment.

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Do you ever feel like you're following all the rules and still not seeing changes? Sometimes, we think we're behaving when it comes to sleep, but potentially, that six hours doesn't really cut it! According to the National Sleep Foundation, "[healthy adults need at least seven hours of sleep per night.](#)"

Look at Sarah, a new graduate who often feels life is overwhelming and frequently has sleepless nights. It was only when she started incorporating power naps into her routine that she felt more focused and energised throughout the day.

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According to [UCL](#), "Napping also appears to be beneficial to the brain – with research showing that even brief naps of 5-15 minutes can instantly improve how well you perform mentally." Their findings "demonstrate a larger total brain volume with more frequent napping. This suggests that regular napping may act as a safeguard, compensating for inadequate sleep and preserving brain health."

In addition to naps, maintaining a balanced diet and getting regular physical activity can contribute to feeling more energised and focused.

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Now, back to the topic of coffee and diet more broadly.

According to the [Sleep Foundation](#), "While caffeine is a common tool to promote wakefulness in the morning and to ward off sleepiness during the day, it comes with potential side effects, including jitteriness, headaches, and nervousness. It can also interfere with sleep, especially if consumed too late in the day."

[Johns Hopkins sleep expert Rachel E. Salas](#) suggests we:

1. "Avoid spicy foods within three hours of bedtime. Do the same with tomato sauce and other acidic foods if they give you heartburn or indigestion."
2. "Eat complex carbohydrates such as whole-wheat toast or a bowl of oatmeal before bed. These foods will trigger the release of the sleepy hormone serotonin, and they don't take long to digest."
3. "Enjoy a glass of tart cherry juice before bed. Tart cherries are a natural source of the sleep-inducing hormone melatonin."

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Daniel felt unable to stick to a healthy lifestyle. He woke up tired, needing an abundance of coffee—which initially cut his hunger until around noon when he would binge eat snacks at lunch. When he started sleeping better, his coffee intake decreased, his cravings for unhealthy foods reduced, and he had the energy to exercise regularly.

Studies have consistently linked poor sleep to obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and a weakened immune system. Prioritising your sleep can help reduce the risk of these health issues and contribute to a longer, healthier life.

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Feeling refreshed in the morning is a sign of good sleep, but sometimes it's easier said than done—and that can involve investigating closely what you 'think' you know about sleep. Here are some tips to help you wake up energised and alert. According to the [Mayo Clinic](#), [you should adhere to these suggestions in order to boost your sleep efficacy:](#)

1. **Maintain a Consistent Sleep Schedule:** Try to go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, even on weekends. This helps regulate your body's internal clock.
2. **Create a Comfortable Sleep Environment:** Make sure your bedroom is conducive to sleep. This includes a comfortable mattress and pillows and a cool, dark, and quiet room.
3. **Limit Screen Time Before Bed:** The blue light emitted by phones, tablets, and computers can interfere with your sleep. Try to avoid screens at least an hour before bedtime.
4. **Manage Stress:** Practice relaxation techniques like deep breathing, meditation, or yoga to reduce stress and anxiety, which can interfere with sleep.
5. **Limit Caffeine and Alcohol Intake:** Avoid caffeine and alcohol in the hours leading up to bedtime, as they can disrupt sleep patterns.
6. **Exercise Regularly:** Engaging in physical activity, such as walking or jogging, can promote better sleep. However, finish exercise at least a few hours before bedtime.

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Ella was a frequent traveller, and jet lag often disrupted her sleep. She would find herself drained in business meetings and too tired to enjoy family time when she returned home. However, she discovered techniques like adjusting her sleep schedule before trips and creating a sleep-conducive environment while on the road. These made a huge difference.

From setting a consistent bedtime to reducing screen time and managing stress, these small changes can significantly affect your sleep quality.

If you sleep better, you'll feel better. Prioritising your sleep not only ensures you wake up refreshed but also contributes to your overall well-being and good health—think about job performance, quality time with friends and family, and satisfaction with your physical well-being. So, remember to optimise your sleep, create a sleep-conducive environment, and make sleep a priority in your daily routine. You'll be dreaming in no time!