



Paperflower Psychiatry
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Stop with caffeine! A lot of people don't realize that the soda they have with dinner, their late night tea or chocolate they snacked on earlier in the evening contains caffeine. Caffeine can delay your ability to fall asleep. Nicotine (vaping, smoking, patches) and alcohol also significantly disrupt sleep. Figure out your bedtime. Six hours before that time, stop using caffeine, nicotine and/or alcohol. Also, if you take an inhaler for breathing/asthma before bedtime, ask your provider if this could be impacting your sleep.

Set a schedule and stick to it. If bedtime is 8:00pm Sunday through Thursday and 4:00am on the weekends...that is an issue. Pick a time somewhere in the middle, and stick to it. You should also pick a time on average to wake up in the morning and stick to that. Over time, your body will learn that routine and adjust to it.

Stop with the naps. Naps can be energizing and wonderful. They can also ruin your sleep. Limit naps to 20-30 minutes (set an alarm!) and do not nap after 3pm.

Limit screen time before bed. Your child playing games on their tablet is not helping them sleep. Browsing tik tok and instagram is not helping you sleep. Limiting TV, tablets, video games and phones 1-2 hours before bed can be a huge help. Blue light is a real thing that we are all learning more about. It genuinely does mess with our brains and tell us "hey, it's daytime!" If you're absolutely opposed to stopping, you can try out **blue light glasses** which are supposed to help with protecting you against the bad effects of electronics.

Exercise and sunshine during the day can genuinely help you later. Try to keep exercise to earlier in the day, and expose yourself to some natural sunlight. It will help you with energy during the day and restful sleep at night. However, avoid exercising too late -- exercising 2-3 hours before bed can make you feel *more* awake.

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Make your room ready for an awesome night of sleep. Are you constantly throwing yourself around trying to get comfortable or sweating? That can be the issue. Make sure your sheets and mattress are comfortable. Replace your [pillows](#) every 1-2 years with a firmness and size you prefer. [Blackout curtains](#) can be helpful to keep the room dark. The temperature should be kept cool. This can mean keeping the windows cracked in cooler weather, turning a fan on or keeping the thermostat at 60-68 degrees can make a huge difference. Remove electronics. Keep it quiet, even if that means getting a [white noise machine](#). [Ear plugs](#) are another option. Both kids and adults may enjoy [dreamcatchers](#) or fun sheets or comforters. If you're on the holistic/spiritual side, I hear keeping some [amethyst](#) by your bedside can help with sleep quality and dreams.

If you have trauma, retake your room. This means you may need to paint your room, redecorate, find new paintings, get rid of old bedding, and move furniture. Pick up some new items and bedding that is *yours* and has not been tainted by your trauma. If you are able to physically move into another room, this could also be helpful. Consider putting up twinkle lights, stars on the ceiling or other things that make you smile or bring you peace. Bring in crystals for protection, or if you are religious, bring in items consistent with your spirituality. Change the colors. Light candles. I also strongly recommend burning sage to “cleanse” the space.

Weighted blankets are amazing. I didn't believe it until I got one. If you find the right one, they aren't hot, sweaty or uncomfortable. It helps calm the sensation of feeling restless and uncomfortable. It is especially great for those with ADHD, anxiety, sensory issues or autism.

Stop using your bed for school, games and work. Your bed should be used for sleep. Should you lay in bed and check your phone, play video games, work on your laptop or do your homework? No. Your bed is for sleeping. That is it. Your brain will learn that too, and soon when you get into bed, you'll be falling asleep way more quickly.

Relax: make a bedtime routine and follow it. This is especially important for kids and teenagers. Find a way to wind down -- put on [cozy jammies](#), take a warm [bath](#), have a warm cozy beverage (without caffeine) or a light snack and end with reading a [book](#) (+ points if it's together with family). Pop on an [eye mask](#). This can be helpful to relax and start to calm your mind. There are apps like [Headspace](#) and [Calm](#) that can also help wind down. [Calm](#) even has bedtime stories for kids *and* adults to fall asleep to!

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Think about your diet and water intake. If you are having a ton of heavy meals with fried food, high fat food, citrus or spicy food, it may be affecting your sleep. The more healthy your meals are throughout the day, the better your sleep will be. Plan dinner and major meals 3-4 hours before bed. If you keep waking up to pee, stop drinking fluids so late (like stop all fluids around 5-6pm). Small snacks are okay, but you shouldn't be having a huge plate of food and a jug of water before bed. Stay hydrated throughout the day and don't wait until 5pm or 6pm to start drinking fluids.

Are your pets waking you up? Kick em out. If your beloved dog, cat or other pet sleeps in your bed and keep stepping on your head..it might be best to give them their own bed.

Read a book. Reading a book in dim light before bed helps your brain to start winding down, and helps your eyes become tired. If your kid is having trouble sleeping, read with them.

Sunlight + activity during the day. If you are sitting inside a dark room all day and barely moving.. Yeah, your brain is going to be confused and not want to go to sleep. Make sure in the morning, you try to get outside even for a few moments to get your eyes some sunshine. Try to move and do things during the day - even if that means things to stimulate your brain (art, music, short walks with a pet, etc).

Focus on positive thoughts and stories in your head. If you are a worrier, force yourself to have a scheduled 30 minute time to worry earlier in the day. You may benefit from writing down your worries. Then when the time is up, stop. Before bed, you should focus your brain on making up positive scenarios, thinking about where you'd like to travel, go, things you want to see, and your dreams and goals.

Unisom. Unisom is an over the counter medication that can help with sleep. It isn't very potent, and is completely safe to take during pregnancy. In fact, if you are pregnant and have morning sickness, unisom + b vitamins can help to reduce that the following day.

Benadryl. Benadryl can be an option on tough nights, but it is not a long term solution. Be cautious - some people have "paradoxical" reactions to Benadryl and end up feeling more awake and hyper after taking it. Check with your provider first - but 25-50mg is an option.

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Essential oils. Spray some [lavender oil on your pillow](#) or use a [roll on](#) for essential oils. Chamomile and lavender are supposed to be helpful for sleep. Be careful if you use these (or an [infuser](#)). While they can be helpful, some oils can be toxic or lethal to dogs or cats.

Melatonin. I'm a HUGE fan of melatonin. I'd much rather have people use this rather than take RX medications. If you have a hard time staying asleep, [melatonin ER](#) may be more beneficial, but otherwise, I'm a HUGE fan of [zzzQuil](#) since it also has valerian root, lavender and chamomile. [Valerian root](#) alone is also an option.

Magnesium. If I'm not recommending melatonin, I'll be recommending magnesium [Calm powder](#). I've used this and loved it. It's a little fizzy and some people are a little turned off by that, but honestly I think it tastes great. It also comes in [gummies](#) and [capsules](#) which I have yet to try. Magnesium is AMAZING for relaxing your muscles, improving sleep quality, and calming anxiety..it'll also help with constipation. If you take too much, you'll be pooping so start slow.

CBD gummies, oil or lotion. I've seen a lot of people no longer need their anxiety or sleep medications because they found the right dose/brand of CBD (with no THC).

Lighting Devices. The [Hatch Restore](#) is one option, but there are other lighting devices that help set a routine for bed and offer white noise. The hatch mimics natural light in the morning for a gentle wakeup with a gentle alarm of your choosing. So the light starts to dim, then slowly comes back on like a sunrise which helps you more naturally wake up.