

LOOKING AFTER YOUR **HEALTH AND WELLBEING** WITH ARTICLES COURTESY OF TOGETHERALL IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE **RESCUE BENEVOLENT FUND**

# The power of sleep: Why we need it and how to get it

Sleep isn't just about the number of hours of shut-eye we get each night, but the quality of sleep we get can have a significant impact on our overall health.

## HOW MUCH SLEEP DO YOU REALLY NEED?

On average, adults need roughly eight hours of sleep per night. However, it's important to listen to your body, so when you wake up feeling your best, track how many hours of sleep you had or remember your nighttime routine. This way you can recreate what works best for you.

Sleep isn't just about the number of hours of shut-eye we get each night, but the quality of sleep we get can have a significant impact on our overall health.



Top: Owl © oniciva2011. Above: How NOT to sleep, with the laptop by your head! © daha3131053. Images via Pixabay.

## THE STAGES OF SLEEP

Sleep happens in a series of recurring sleep stages. Each stage plays a part in restoring us and preparing us for the day ahead. The stages of sleep are:

- 1: Drowsiness** we are feeling tired and ready to slip into slumber
- 2: Deep restorative sleep** (non-dreaming deep sleep)
- 3: Alert stages** (non-dreaming light sleep)
- 4: Dreaming stages** (REM sleep).

Each cycle lasts about 90 minutes and repeats four to six times over the course of a night. For good quality sleep, these stages repeat uninterrupted. But if you find yourself stressed, anxious or not sleeping well, then you may wake and interrupt these cycles, which can leave you tired and irritated the next day.

Our body needs all the stages of sleep to feel our best. Deep sleep renews the body and helps us feel energised the next day. It also boosts our immune system and is imperative for our growth and development. Deep sleep also secretes a growth hormone that helps the body repair itself.

REM or dreaming sleep renews our mind. It allows our brain to process and bring together what we have learned in the day and helps strengthen our memory. REM

sleep also helps boost our mood by replenishing our brain's chemical messengers.

## A HUGE IMPACT ON OUR SLEEP HEALTH? LIGHT AND SCREENS

Screens have a significant effect on our sleep because light is one of the most powerful regulators of our internal body clock. Our brains normally secrete more melatonin when darkness falls, making us tired and ready for sleep, but with TVs, tablets, laptops and phones, we are getting more light at night, preventing melatonin production, making us less drowsy and unable to fall asleep at a normal time.

## OTHER FACTORS THAT CAN PREVENT QUALITY SLEEP...

- Stressful events of the day
- Difficult life situations, such as losing a loved one
- Worrying about work, relationships
- Anxiety, depression, or post-traumatic stress
- Poor physical health or side effects of medications
- Use of stimulants or lifestyle habits that work against your internal clock.



## HOW TO IMPROVE SLEEP

We may try to combat tiredness with naps, coffee and alcohol, but these actually disrupt our sleep even further. Lifestyle changes or improving your 'sleep hygiene' can help you get back on track after sleepless nights or waking up feeling tired. Think about the barriers that prevent you from having good quality sleep. Is it your study schedule? Your social life? Daily stressors that prevent you from relaxing? Try some of these tips to work on improving your sleep:

- **Create a schedule to make sleep a priority and prevent you from staying up late:** Togetherall has a goal-setting guide to help you keep on track. You could also use the journal tool to create a priority list with sleeping being at the top.
- **Avoid screen time while in bed:** The blue light from your devices blocks melatonin, preventing us from getting tired. Try using laptops or phones at a table or desk and watching TV on the couch and not in bed.
- **Cut down on caffeine later in the day:** Ideally, eight hours before bed.
- **Nicotine and alcohol are stimulants that can prevent us from feeling tired and sleeping:** Keep this in mind as you assess your sleep hygiene.

Sleep is imperative to our physical and mental health. We need proper sleep to feel refreshed to take on the day. If you find yourself struggling with sleep, Togetherall has courses and resources to help you better understand your relationship with sleep so you can feel better and handle everything life throws your way. See below for how to register. ☺

Mental health support online, **anonymous & 24/7.**

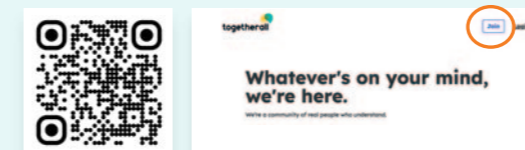
At Togetherall you can speak to someone who understands what you're going through, **anytime & anywhere.**

## AS A MOUNTAIN OR CAVE RESCUE TEAM MEMBER YOU CAN ACCESS TOGETHERALL FREE OF CHARGE

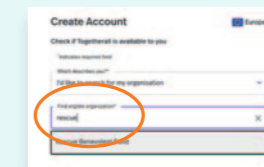
The Togetherall digital mental health and wellbeing support service is a completely anonymous community where you can express yourself freely and openly. Professionally trained Wall Guides and clinical professionals monitor the community to ensure the safety and anonymity of all members. Once you're registered and logged in, there's a range of activities that allow you to work through what's troubling you. **Share your thoughts** with other community members, gain support and advice or offer YOUR valuable support to someone else who needs it. **Access a wealth of useful resources** and join self-guided courses covering the key topics which affect all our lives. Or take **clinically-approved self-assessments** to help you understand more about yourself. ☺

See below for instructions on how to register

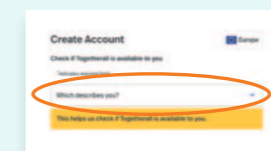
### 1 Go to **togetherall.com** or scan QR code. Click 'Join'



### 4 Enter 'rescue' to find Rescue Benevolent Fund



### 2 To create account Select 'Which describes you?'



### 5 Enter email. Create profile name. Enter details. Click 'Submit details'

Start exploring...

### 3 Select 'I'd like to search for my organisation'

