

Maximise your sleep and increase your energy

Most of us feel that we could do with having some more energy at times. For some of us it is evident in feeling lethargic during the day or feeling you could put your head down and sleep mid afternoon and for others it is feeling stressed and overwhelmed by simply feeling there isn't enough energy in the tank to do everything that is needed.

A lot of the time we are draining ourselves because we are demanding so much of ourselves in the daytime but are not getting the quality of sleep to support us in this.

There are 2 components that we can work on to try to give us a better experience:

1 - make sure we are maximising our sleep to get the best quality rest available to us

2 - mentally challenge our perception of our energy levels so we can create a different experience

The human body is designed to sleep and to achieve the rest it needs to feel good the next day. This is a process that happens automatically without us needing to try. However, as our lives have got busier and more demanding and as we live in a world with more distractions than ever, we just need to make sure that we do what we can to support the body in these natural processes.

This workbook gives you the guidelines you need to make sure you are doing everything you can to support yourself. It is up to you how you take this information and apply it in your own life and your own routine.

If you have concerns about your energy levels, it is always worth checking this out with your GP.

'Most people have no idea how good their body is designed to feel' - Kevin Trudeau

How to maximise your sleep

Start from the position of understanding that your body knows how to sleep and to get all the rest it needs. You do not need to try to sleep, there is no pressure and nothing to feel anxious about.

Your only job is to nurture and support the natural processes of the body so that you can maximise their effect.

Consider these 4 elements and implement them in your life.

1) Prioritise it

When we have a busy life with lots of responsibilities and when there are so many fun and interesting distractions available to us, it is easy to put sleep towards the bottom of the priority list. Sleep becomes the thing we do when we have got everything else done or when we start to panic about it being late and we have lots to do tomorrow.

It is also very common for us to expect sleep to just happen. When it suits us, we just want the switch in our brain to be flicked and to shift us into sleep. Whilst some of us seem to be able to do this, it is not very common and more importantly, the sleep we get in this way is often not the most restful it could be.

So, lets look at how to make sleep a priority for you.

How many hours sleep do you think is ideal for you? Think back to when you have felt your sleep has been good. How much sleep were you getting? If you were to wake up naturally without an alarm, how many hours sleep would you have had? For most people this is between 6 and 8 hours.

The ideal amount of sleep for me is...

It is important to respect your own needs, even if these are different to the needs of your friends, your partner or anyone else in your life.

Now, think about what time you want or need to get up on the average morning. This might be the time that the alarm goes off for work or it might be the time you would like to get up to exercise before work or to get organised for the day.

The time I need to get up is

Now, count back the ideal number of hours sleep you need from the time you need to get up. This gives you the time you need to be aiming to go to sleep.

The time I need to aim to go to sleep is

Now factor in an hour for wind down time before you go to sleep - this could be for reading, watching TV, having a bath or anything else that makes you feel relaxed and calm.

Wind down time needs to start at

What things might prevent you from doing this at the moment? How can you change this?

What habits do you need to break? For example, surfing the internet, watching too much TV.

What habits or structures do you need to put in place in order to make sure you can get to bed at the time you have identified? (eg, eat a little earlier, watch one TV programme per night instead of three)

Although this may feel like a lot of effort to begin with, you are allowing yourself to make your sleep a priority which will then have positive repercussions through your whole life.

2) *Support the processes of the body*

Your body inherently knows how to sleep well and get the rest it needs. To maximise this natural ability we just need to support it by creating a good environment through our surroundings and the actions we take.

Allow your body chemistry to prepare you for sleep. Melatonin is a naturally occurring substance in the body which is there to transition us into sleep. We can encourage the production of melatonin by having some calm, wind down time in the evening. This involves only doing activities that are calm, relaxed and comfortable, thus allowing all the adrenalin from the day to disperse and a tired and sleepy feeling to take over instead.

What will you do as part of your wind down time? It doesn't have to be the same every night. What activities make you feel relaxed?

Support your natural body chemistry even further by making sure that caffeine is kept to a minimum and you stop drinking it mid afternoon at the latest. Also make sure there is a gap (preferably a few hours) between finishing exercising and going to bed in order to give your body time to come down from the adrenalin.

Is there anything you need to adjust to support your natural body chemistry?

Next, think about your sleep space...how do you feel in your bedroom?
What could you do to make your bedroom feel more like a relaxing haven?
What areas of your bedroom do you need to declutter for it to feel more peaceful?

3) *Keep a good routine*

Maintaining a steady routine of the same bed time and the same wake up time allows your body clock to support you by preparing your body to expect to follow this pattern. That's why following a sleep routine feels easier and easier over time as you are working with the natural rhythm of your body. You should try to follow this routine at weekends as well as during the week. You may choose to stay in bed a little longer at the weekend and perhaps do something like read before you get up, but your wake up time should set in your internal body clock and become your routine.

Of course, there will be some nights when your routine is broken due to doing something fun or when you really want to do something else. You have a life to live. What we are aiming for is that the majority of your nights are kept to a good routine so you establish a good standard for yourself.

4) *Create strong mental boundaries*

Firm boundaries are essential when it comes to maximising your sleep as this helps to protect your mind from wandering thoughts and distractions.

Fix in your mindset that between the hours you have identified to be asleep, nothing is as important as your sleep. You refuse to allow anything to interfere with your good quality sleep during that time.

How and where will you empty your head before you go to bed? (eg, on a to do list, in your diary, as a note in your phone). Find a system that works for you and use it every night.

Also remember to keep technology distractions away from you once you get in to bed. You can reply to any messages or check any notifications in the morning - nothing is as important as your sleep.

How to increase your energy

There are many factors that affect how energetic we are feeling; the quality of our sleep, feeling overwhelmed, constantly being in artificial light, lack of fresh air, monotony of routine, negative thoughts etc.

Important

If you have concerns regarding your energy levels it is always worth checking this out with your GP to make sure there isn't anything else going on that you need to be aware of.

It might be that you feel generally low in energy, that you have a big energy slump during the day or that you find it hard to face the day fearing that you don't have the energy.

The tips and suggestions I have included here are designed to try to help you to break out of the low energy cycle caused by your environment or your mindset. Assuming you have checked any concerns with your GP, here are four things you can make sure to put into practice to boost your energy levels.

1) Eat Well

The food and drink you put into your body is effectively the fuel you are giving yourself to run on. You can only run effectively if the fuel is good quality and in the right proportions.

I am not going to pretend to be a nutritional expert but we all know that it is important to drink lots of water to stay properly hydrated, eat fresh fruit and veg, limit your sugar intake and avoid processed foods as far as possible.

You could look online for healthy eating plans if you feel you need something structured to follow.

The actions I need to take to improve the fuel I am giving to my body are

'Clutter is nothing more than postponed decisions'

2) De-clutter your space

Constantly being surrounded by clutter means we are constantly surrounded by distractions and potential stress triggers. It can make you feel very overwhelmed and disorganised even if this is quite subconscious. This is very exhausting for the human brain and can lead to a significant reduction in your energy levels.

Taking some time to clear your space and organise your belongings means it becomes much easier to focus on one thing at a time.

Some common areas that need de-cluttering are

- Your home environment - particularly the areas where you try to relax
- Your workspace - desk/office etc
- Your handbag
- Your digital life - computer/ laptop desktop, files, folders, iCloud etc.

What do you need to de-clutter or organise in order to create an ideal environment for your brain to operate from? When will you do this?

3) *Adopt a different mindset*

Our mindset is the perspective we choose to view a situation from.

It is very easy to slip into a negative mindset when we are constantly reinforcing feeling low in energy. This happens when we are listening to a story in our mind which is telling us things like 'I'm so tired', 'I can't be bothered' or questioning 'how am i going to get to the end of today'.

When this is what is happening in our thoughts we tend to believe it and so our body responds with low energy and we often give up doing things we enjoy and our lives get smaller.

When do you experience the negative mental script in relation to your energy levels? In what situations?

We need to change this mental script in order to change our experience.

Try telling yourself

'I have all the energy I need to do everything I want to do'

'I am completely ready for the day'

'It's just what I do'

'I will take one hour at a time and feel stronger and stronger as the day progresses'

Be strong and repeat these positive statements to yourself whenever you need to. It takes a bit of time and a lot of reinforcement to make this the new automatic way of thinking.

There are some days that we are low in energy for a very good reason and we should not expect ourselves to be on top form all of the time. For example, if you are recovering from illness, have had a bad few nights sleep or have been very busy you are likely to be tired and your energy is likely to be lower than you would ideally like it to be.

On days like this I really believe that the best thing we can do is to be kind to ourselves and not expect too much from ourselves. Instead, try to think what you could do to replenish your energy - perhaps have a warm bath, have an early night or spend some time with someone who makes you feel loved. You cannot be full of energy and incredibly productive all the time.

Try to consider your situation and decide whether you need to be kind to yourself or whether you should make an effort to change your mindset.

4) Take uplifting action

The actions we take can hugely affect our experience. When we find ourselves in a negative spiral of low energy we commonly do very little and so stay in the same feelings.

To break out of this negative spiral, we can make a choice to take action that will uplift us. Even if we don't feel like doing this to start with, it is almost guaranteed that we will feel better for doing it.

Uplifting action includes things like exercising, going for a walk, listening to your favourite song, dancing or talking to a friend.

What activities make you feel uplifted and energetic?

How could you fit some of these activities into your day? Put particular focus on the times of the day when you notice your energy slump. For example, you might listen to uplifting music on your way to work, have a brisk walk at lunchtime and exercise straight after work.

It is also really powerful to act 'as if' you have all the energy you would like to have. For example, if you are feeling lethargic and low in energy and are about to do something like take your children to the park, cook your evening meal or meet a friend for a coffee, pretend you are feeling really energetic and approach the activity 'as if' you are feeling all that energy. Let your voice, how you move your body and what you do reflect the energy you are pretending to have.

This tricks the brain to jump out of that low energy rut and get into a different state or energy. At some point, you will realise that you are no longer pretending and you are feeling good.

It is a good idea to surround yourself with positivity. Positivity breeds energy. Surround yourself with things that make you feel motivated and energetic.

Find your favourite quotes or images that make you feel inspired and positive and put them in places you can refer to easily such as the front of your diary or in your purse.

Google uplifting quotes and see which ones you like the most and write them here

Purposefully put some of these quotes where you will see them regularly and they can help to pick up your energy when you need it.

'The world belongs to the energetic' - Ralph Waldo Emerson