

WEEK 6

Maintain Healthy Sleep Habits

*Continue tracking your sleep.
Continue changes that are helping you sleep.*

CONGRATULATIONS!

You have made it to Week 6 of the SleepWell® program. Hopefully you have learned more about sleep and how to create your own healthy sleep environment. Your changes should be starting to show effects on your sleep. Your improved sleep should also be helping you feel more alert and energetic during the day. This week will focus on maintaining habits and what to do going forward.

Expand Your Calming Environment

Did creating a calming, sleep-promoting bedroom environment help improve your sleep quality and length? You can clear the clutter in other areas of your life, too. Messy work and living spaces can cause undue stress.

- Throw away or shred old papers.
- Organize your desk or work area. Organize a messy closet or cupboard.
- Store packaged foods and small appliances away to reduce clutter on kitchen countertops.

WEEK 6: *Maintain Healthy Sleep Habits*

Reinforce Healthy Habits

Tune into changes in your mood and alertness. Use your SleepWell® Tracker to get daily feedback.

Anytime you are given a reward for something you do, chances are you will do it again. For example, if someone handed you a \$100 bill each time you walked around the block, you would take a lot of walks. The \$100 bill was a “reward” that reinforced your behavior.

Self-Reward. Give yourself a reward for working hard to improve your sleep.

- Buy or pick flowers.
- Picnic in the park.
- Buy a magazine.
- Call an old friend.
- Watch your favorite movie.

List rewards you have given yourself so far or plan to give yourself.

Recognize Intrinsic Rewards. Many rewards are not things you can touch. Check the rewards you have received so far during the program.

- ☐ I feel a sense of accomplishment.
- ☐ I feel pride that I am following through on something I started.
- ☐ I feel more refreshed and alert upon waking.
- ☐ I think more clearly.
- ☐ I react quicker.
- ☐ I perform better at work.
- ☐ I find it easier to make decisions.
- ☐ I do not feel drowsy when I drive.

Prepare for New Challenges

New challenges may come up. Your schedule may change. Your child’s schedule may change. Establish healthy habits, but be ready to make changes when needed. Whenever possible, try to plan ahead for a change.

Example

Scenario: Your child will be starting school in a week. You will need to wake up at 6:00 a.m. to help him get ready for school. Currently you wake up at 7 a.m.

Sleep Plan: At least four days before you need to wake up earlier, start shifting your sleep window backwards by 15 minutes each night. You can also shift it back by 30 minutes a few days before the change. The more you can plan ahead, the more gradual the change will be for your routine and your body. On the first day you need to wake up earlier, you are more likely to feel refreshed and ready for the change. Have your child join you in this sleep shift to help him or her feel ready as well!

List changes to your sleep schedule you foresee. Write the date of the change and the date you will start to adjust your sleep. Make gradual changes. Allow at least several days to adjust.

Change to my sleep schedule	When this change starts	When I will start to adjust my sleep schedule
Example: Kids go back to school	September 8th	September 1st

Respond to a Bad Night of Sleep

If you have a few poor nights of sleep, shift back to a more restrictive sleep window to increase your sleep drive.

Recall what helped you to improve your sleep. Focus on these strategies to help re-set your healthy sleep.

Example:

- Stay up late to increase sleep drive.
- Get out of bed when you can’t sleep.
- Clear your head by writing down your thoughts and worries.
- Track your sleep.

You will never be back at “square one” because you have learned so many things about healthy sleep. If what you tried before does not work, go back through this guide and try new tools. You may need to use different skills to address the new challenge to your sleep.

See Slip-Ups in a Positive Light

No one is perfect. If you slip back into old habits, like watching TV late in bed, you may feel guilt or conflict. Also, you may view the slip-up as being due to a lack of willpower or strength. You may feel a sense of being helpless or hopeless. These feelings are not productive or motivating.

It is important to understand the feelings that relate to a slip-up. You have not failed. You now have a new challenge to address. Define a new goal. Apply what you already know. Seek out new skills, tools, or support that you need for success.

How to Talk about Your Sleep Improvements

Others may notice you have more energy during the day. They may know it is because you are sleeping better and changing other lifestyle factors. As with any personal change, how much you talk about it is up to you.

When you talk about changes you have made, use “I messages.” An “I message” starts with “I” and expresses a feeling.

Examples:

- **I think** dimming the lights before bed helped **me** to be more ready for sleep.
- **I decided** to improve my sleep habits so **I could** be a safer driver.

Avoid using the word “you” to tell someone else what will work for him or her. Avoid telling someone else why he or she should improve their sleep. This can lead to defensive and negative feelings, even if you are trying to help.

What worked for you may not work for someone else. Everyone needs to find what works for him or her. If someone has experienced sleep problems for more than three weeks, it is important for him or her to seek a doctor’s advice.

If someone you care about is also working to improve their sleep, you can help in the following ways:

- Model healthy lifestyle behaviors like eating fruits and vegetables and exercising regularly.
- Help with driving, childcare, chores, etc.
- Practice healthy ways to manage stress.
- Plan times together to be physically active. Go for a walk outside or at a mall.
- Plan times together to relax. Picnic at the park, watch a movie together, or just sit and talk about your day.

Summary

Continue to make sleep a priority. Assess your energy and make adjustments to your lifestyle and sleep habits as needed. Practice relaxation and stress management techniques.

Return to each week’s activities and suggestions regularly. The more tools you use, the more you will understand what works for you. Improving your sleep takes self-discovery and patience. Going back and spending time on a previous week’s activities may help you.

Reflect on your experience.

Complete the following.

Ways my sleep improved since starting the Sleep Well® program:

Changes I think are having the biggest impact on my sleep:

In what areas do I still need to make changes? These can be in my sleep environment, lifestyle behaviors, stress management, communication with others, or another factor that affects my sleep.