SLEEPING WELL, FEELING BETTER

Did you know that sleep is one of the most impactful ways to take care of your mental and physical health? A good night's sleep can contribute to:

- An improved ability to focus, remember and retain new information
- A stronger immune response, making it easier for your body to fight off illness
- A greater ability to complete tasks like studying, researching and writing
- Improved mood, where you'll be less likely to feel anxious, sad or worried

Everyone knows that getting enough sleep is important for learning and memory. Yet sleep is often the first thing that gets cut when you have a busy schedule. Sleep is one way of to help yourself succeed at university.

How Much Sleep Do You Need?

Most adults need around 8 hours of sleep per night. You cannot adapt to lack of sleep! You will not "get used" to functioning with less sleep than you require.

> **Students Who Pull All-Nighters Tend to Have Lower GPAs**
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> Staying up late to study is not good for your grades. Your performance starts to decline after 15-16 hours of continuous wakefulness. After being up all time, you are less alert between 6AM-11AM.
>
> Plan to study over more days instead of cramming the night before an exam. A good night's sleep will lead to better memory recall and improved academic performance.

Tips for a Good Night's Sleep

As a university student, your sleep can be impacted by a variety of reasons. It's important to find out what helps you get a quality sleep, and what doesn't. Consider what you do throughout the day and before bedtime, to see what benefits your sleep.

Before bed…

(1) **Maintain a regular wake and sleep schedule, even on weekends.** Large variations in sleep schedules can have the same effects as getting less than normal amounts of sleep.

(2) **Come up with a regular, relaxing bedtime routine.** Take time in the evening to unwind before bed so you're relaxed when you're trying to fall asleep. Avoid stimulating activities like studying right before bed. Instead, try meditation, read a book or listen to some music.

(3) **Avoid caffeine, cannabis and alcohol.** These have been shown to result in restlessness, low quality of sleep and reduces the time spent in deep sleep. If you are having trouble falling asleep, avoid caffeine after 2PM. As little as 2 cups of coffee can interfere with sleep.

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(4) Stop using technology and screens at least 30 minutes before bed. Although using a laptop or cellphone may be necessary for studying and communicating, light from the screen can block melatonin, which helps you sleep.

(5) Associate Your Bed with Sleep. Try not to study or watch TV on your bed. If you cannot sleep, get up and do something else, like read a book.

(6) Write down your thoughts. Try to note down thoughts, create a to-do list, write down persistent thoughts, or jot down all the things you're grateful for. Take time to think about what you write down and try to resolve issues at another time.

Sleep Strategies for Exams…

- **Avoid all-nighters.** You may occasionally have to pull an all-nighter, but not sleeping at all for even one night can affect your memory, mood, your ability to retain information, and your immune system. Studies show students who get a good night's sleep perform better on tests than those that stay up to study more.
- **Plan for exam season**. Consider how you can be at your best and take care of the basics (e.g. sleep, nutrition, physical activity) during exams. Learn how to manage your time and plan for a hectic exam schedule.
- **Practice strategies for managing your stress**. Remember, sleep can be a great method of self-care. Practice stress-reduction strategies before bed to make sure that stress does not interfere with your sleep.
- **Don't rely on weekend catch-up**. You may be tempted to rely on the weekend to 'catch up' on sleep that you missed during the week. Generally, this only worsens your sleep pattern. The best solution is to get a regular amount of sleep as many nights as possible, and when necessary sleep only an hour longer during the weekend than you regular weekday wake-up time.

A Note About Napping

If you are going to map, set an alarm for 10-30 minutes. This is the optimal duration of a 'power nap' to give you a boost of energy and alertness. A nap longer than 30 minutes can cause you to feel groggy. Long naps, or naps late in the day, can impact your ability to sleep well at night. Cut out napping if you are having trouble getting a full night's sleep.

Stress-relieving and calming strategies can also be helpful, such as:

- Taking a hot bath or shower right before going to bed
- Listening to relaxing music before bed
- Meditating or doing deep breathing exercises.
- Moving your nighttime worries out of your head by writing them down in a notebook that you keep beside your bed.

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