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# **Wellness Coaching Sleep Handbook**

# Contents

Sleep Hygiene.....	1
Sleep Tools.....	5
Travel/Shift Work & Sleep.....	8
What Sleep Does for Us.....	10

You have no doubt experienced the dreary consequences of a poor night's rest. The day following a night of no sleep can seem to drag on forever. Whether you are a night owl, staying up well past all your friends, or a morning bird, full of energy while others are struggling to awake, this handbook can help you get the most out of sleep. Impacting everything from our immune systems to our memories, sleep is a vital part of life. Use this resource to teach yourself more about this important activity and how you can better your sleeping skills.

This handbook is designed to give you the foundational tools needed to get the most out of a night's rest. Of central help to the creation of this handbook was *Why We Sleep: Unlocking the Power of Sleep and Dreams* by Matthew Walker. Use this handbook as a self-help, self-paced resource. There is no need to read the handbook in its entirety--just go to whatever page you believe can help you the most.



# Sleep Hygiene

Just like good dental hygiene there are certain steps you can take to ensure you are setting yourself up for success in regards to sleep. In the sections below, you can read more on what to do in the hours before bed, when getting ready for sleep, and when waking up. How many of these recommendations do you follow? Use the space at the end of the section to create an action plan.

## Before Bed

**1**

Avoid alcohol, nicotine, and caffeine.

- Alcohol reduces the amount of Rapid Eye Movement (REM) sleep and causes more nighttime awakenings (even if you do not remember all of them!) Try to avoid drinking alcohol 2-3 hours before bed.
- Nicotine is a stimulant and can disrupt natural sleepiness and mask tiredness.
- Caffeine has a half life of around 5 hours in the body. Hours after consumption, it can still impact our body's signals for sleep.

**2**

Lower the lights!

- Our bodies get their cues for wakefulness and sleep from light.
- Melatonin (which starts and stops the timing of sleep) is produced in greater quantities when the brain detects reductions in light.
- Use lamps or other soft lighting in the hours before bed.
- Avoid using screens in bed!

**3**

Setting the thermostat

- Cooler body temperatures are correlated with sleep.
- During REM sleep, thermoregulation is actually disabled by the brain. This is partly why we wake up when we get too hot--we have to manually change the environment because the body can't regulate its own temperature. A comfortable room temperature will reduce night time disturbances due to overheating.
- In general, a room temperature of around 65 degrees Fahrenheit is recommended.



## Going to Bed

1

Be consistent!

- Try to go to bed within the same hour time span each night. This will help train your body and brain to prepare for sleep.

2

Hunger

- Listen to you body. If you are hungry before bed, eat a snack. This can help reduce the need for a midnight snack later in the night.

3

Dress for the Occasion

- If you always wake up to find that the clothes you went to sleep in are now on the floor, that may be a sign you get too hot during the night. Don't lose sleep to tossing and turning, shedding extra clothes. Wear what is needed to maintain a comfortable temperature throughout the entire night.

4

Distressing Thoughts

- If you find it hard to fall asleep because of ruminating thoughts, try writing down your thoughts before going to sleep. Writing them down can help you process the thoughts and also helps externalize them. You can always return to your list of thoughts in the morning!

5

Calm the Body

- If your body feels restless when trying to fall asleep, try a progressive muscle relaxation. Flex and relax different muscle groups starting in the toes and working through the body to your head. Hold each muscle group under tension for five seconds before releasing.
- If you still cannot fall asleep, get out of bed and do other activities until you feel tired.





## Waking Up

1

Be Consistent!

- Try to wake up at the same time or within the same hour time span each day. This helps train your body and brain for when it is time to be awake.

2

Don't Hit Snooze!

- Sounds terrible, but hitting snooze is not recommended. When we hit snooze we worsen our morning sleep inertia. Sleep inertia is the groggy disorienting feeling we have upon waking. However, upon first waking up, we just woke up from a long, good sleep. Allowing our brains to begin the process all over again just to be jolted awake five minutes later, creates more powerful sleep inertia.

3

Use Light

- Just as darkness is the signal bearer for sleep, light ushers in the call to be awake. Open the curtains or turn on the lights to signal to the brain it's time to start the day.

4

Hydrate

- Upon waking you just went 7-9 hours without drinking anything. Don't become dehydrated by not taking in some fluids. Drink some water before that cup of coffee. (Coffee is a natural diuretic and can deplete your fluid levels.)

5

Fuel Up

- To lessen the morning slumber don't just grab a cup of coffee before you leave. Eat something to give your body the fuel it needs. It's in the name--break-fast. Break the 7-9 hour fast you underwent with breakfast.



Use the goal setting tool on the next page to set your personal sleep hygiene goals.

# My Sleep Hygiene

Use the space below to draft sleep goals related to your environmental, physiological, and mental circumstances. Use the suggestions below each topic to think about what specific areas you want to focus on.

## Environment

- Light
- Noise
- Temperature
- Bed comfort

My goals are...

## Physiological

- Caffeine
- Restlessness
- Alcohol/Nicotine
- Hunger

My goals are...

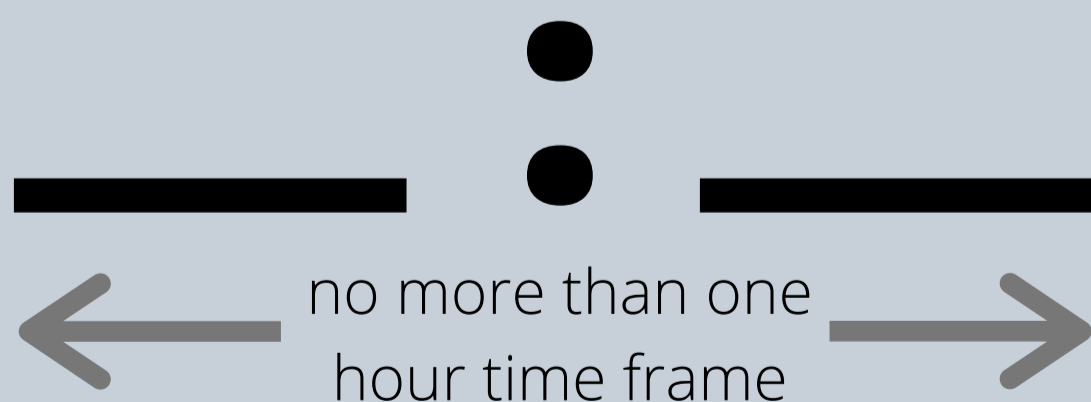
## Mental

- Stress
- Anxious
- Distracting thoughts

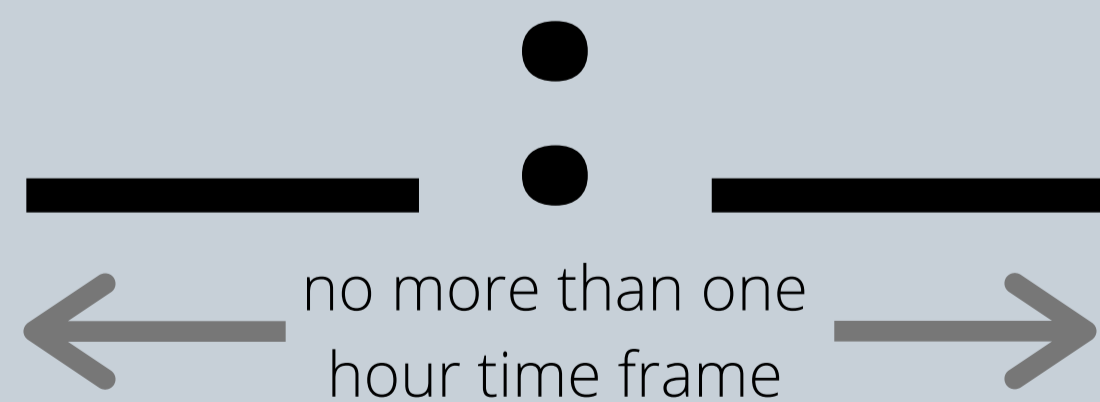
My goals are...

## Sleep Consistency Goals

**Each day I will go to sleep between:**



**Each day I will wake up between:**



Want to make sure you plan well and stay accountable? Consider connecting with a RecWelll Wellness Coach to gain more insights and resources.

# Sleep Tools

Explore the following tools and online resources to learn more about tracking sleep and your personal sleep habits.

## Sleep Log

Use the below log to track a week's worth of sleep and how you felt afterwards. Are you consistently going to bed and waking up at the same time?

Date	Bedtime	Woke Up	I Felt
	Time you went to sleep	Time you woke up	How rested did you feel in the morning?

## Guided Meditations



If your mind or body are restless when it is time to go to bed, practicing mindfulness may help. RecWell has guided meditations available online. For a restless body, try the 10 minute body scan. For a restless mind, try the 10 minute "Unhooking from Thoughts" meditation. Scan the QR code to the left or click here to be taken to the guided meditations.

## Sleep Assessment

### Some Simple Questions to get Started:

Before exploring more lengthy assessments, you might find it useful to ask yourself these two simple questions:

1. After waking up in the morning, could you fall back asleep at ten or eleven a.m.?  
If yes, it is likely you are not getting enough sleep quantity and/or quality.
2. Can you function optimally without caffeine before noon?  
If not, you may be self-medicating your sleep deprivation.

Questions and answers adapted from Walker, M. (2017). *Why We Sleep Unlocking the Importance of Sleep and Dreams*. New York, NY: Scribner

Below are some validated measures for sleep. Explore the different scales to get a better understanding of your sleep habits and needs. *Note: no scale below is designed to diagnose sleep disorders or conditions. Please consult a medical expert if you have questions about your individual sleep problems or if you believe you have a sleep disorder.*

### EPWORTH SLEEPINESS SCALE

Click here for the assessment or scan the QR code.



The Epworth Sleepiness Scale (John, M.W., 1991) measures daytime sleepiness. Daytime sleepiness can give valuable insights into how your night's rest is or is not preparing you for the day ahead.

### MEDICAL OUTCOMES STUDY - SLEEP SCALE

Click here for the assessment or scan the QR code.



The MOS - Sleep Scale (Hays, R. D., & Stewart, A. L., 1992) measures the user's sleep outcome based on self-report of several key domains of sleep.



## Sleep Goals

In the space below, create your specific sleep goals which relate to desired outcomes and values. Use some of the previous tools to help you think about specific action steps.

If I got better sleep I would be able to:

Better sleep fits my ideal lifestyle because:

My specific sleep goal(s) are to:

1

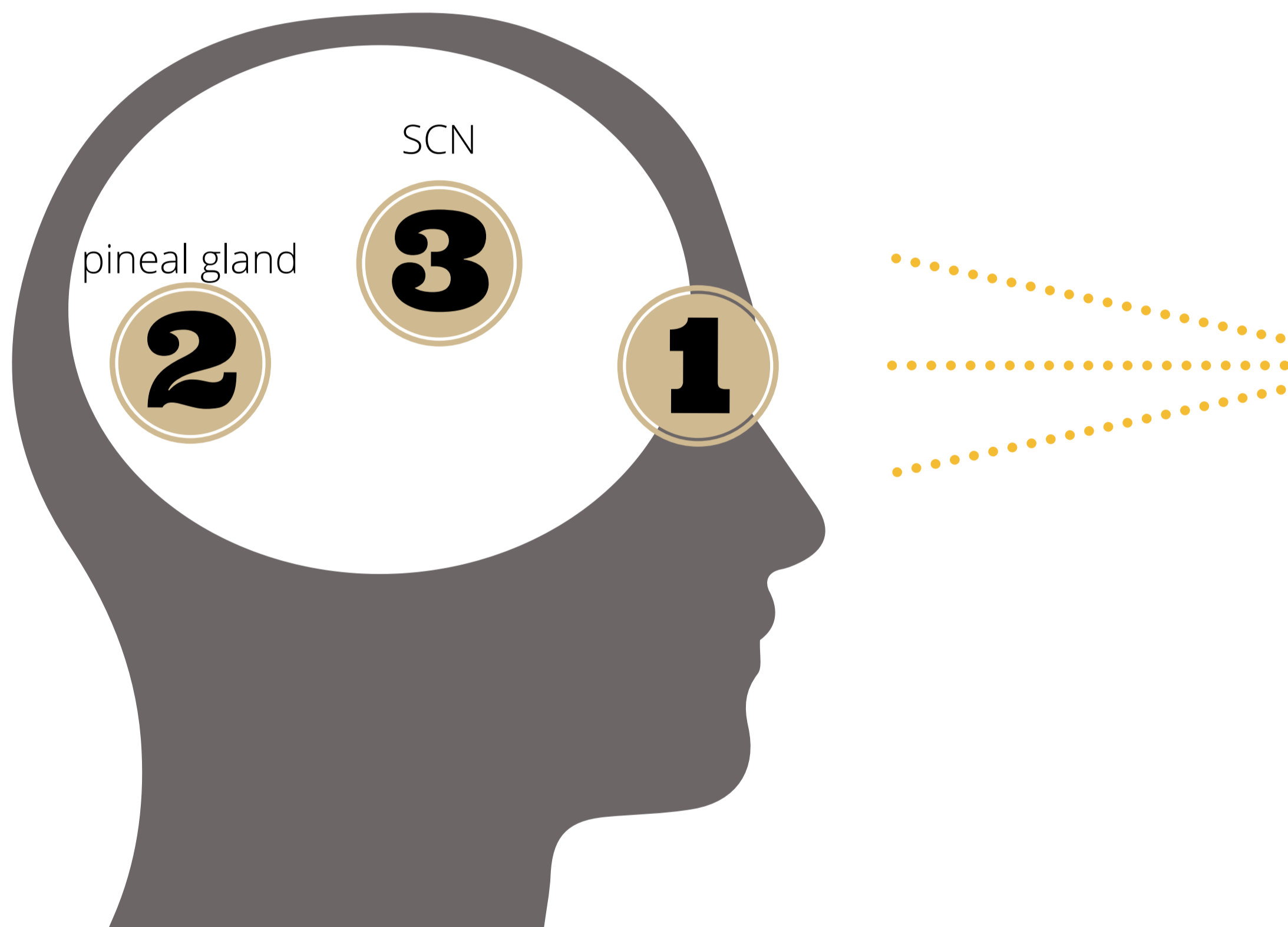
2

3

# Travel & Shift Work

If you have ever traveled across multiple time zones or taken on new shift work then you know the harsh effect of off-setting your body's sleep cycle. Below are some explanations to help you understand what you can do to help your body re-adjust.

## Body Clocks & Timezones



Light is king when it comes to sleep. While our bodies do have their own internal clocks-- the circadian rhythm--governed by the suprachiasmatic nucleus (SCN), even this impressive biological clock needs fine tuning every day. This is where light comes in. Based off the light exposure throughout the day, the SCN tweaks its sleep signaling effects and when they start. Our circadian rhythm is what keeps our bodies in a stable flux of wakefulness during the day, and sleepiness during the night.

Light also acts on the pineal gland. As light gradually lessens throughout the day, the pineal gland begins to produce melatonin, the hormone that signals its time for sleep.





When it comes to travel, our brains cannot keep pace with how fast we travel from one place to another. On average, our brains adjust to new time zones at a rate of one hour per day. In the meantime, our sleep cycle is still operating on a different time zone. Unfortunately there is little we can do to speed up this process. However, try the following to help your brain adjust:

- In the 3-5 days before your trip, try adjusting your normal sleep schedule by 10-15 minutes each day either earlier or later than normal depending on where you are going. This can help prepare your brain and lessen the shock at your new destination.
- When traveling west, exposure to light in the evening can help you adjust.
- When traveling east, exposure to light in the morning can help you adjust.

Shift work can also cause sleep issues. If you have a job that requires you to work into the night or before the sun rises, your body will need some extra help adjusting. Consider the following as suggested by the Mayo Clinic:

- You must be diligent in keeping a consistent sleep schedule. You are already going against your body's natural sleep cycle. To train your body for the adjustment, you have to go to bed and wake up at the same time each day.
- Be conscious of light exposure. Keep your sleeping area dark. Keep light exposure bright at work.



Some sleep problems do have an underlying medical reason. If you have tried good sleep practices and still can't get a good night's rest, consider scheduling a meeting with your doctor.

## What Sleep Does for Us

### Physical/Athletic Performance:

- Primary time for muscle repair
- Helps regulate metabolism
- Improves reaction time
- Strengthens the immune system
- Regulates blood pressure
- Strengthens muscle memory

REM sleep helps us ignore the obvious with the creation of novel, abstract ideas.

During REM sleep, the brain finds connections between seemingly non-related information.

### Mind and Memory:

- Prunes old neural pathways
- Forms new neural pathways
- Strengthens memory of newly learned material
- Improves concentration
- "Cleans" the brain by allowing waste to be removed
- May help reduce emotional "baggage" from lived experiences through the process of dreams
- Helps the brain process emotional cues more accurately

### Too Much Sleep Can:

- Increase chances for diabetes
- Increase blood pressure
- Increase the chance of stroke
- Basically too much sleep carries with it the same negative side effects as too little sleep.

