

# Sleeping Well and Managing Night Sweats

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# Housekeeping

- Mute when not talking
  - Confidentiality
- Respect for each other
- Please ask any additional questions at the end

# Objectives

- **Psychoeducation of sleep** (circadian rhythms, sleep pressure, hyperarousal)
- **How to remedy poor sleep** (sleep hygiene, sleep environment, associations, morning and nighttime routines )
- **Responding calmly to a night sweat**

# How much sleep is enough?

The amount of sleep we need depends on many different factors such as age/sex/health and other element. (General consensus of 6 –10 hours)

We sleep for a 1/3 of our lives, 26 years.

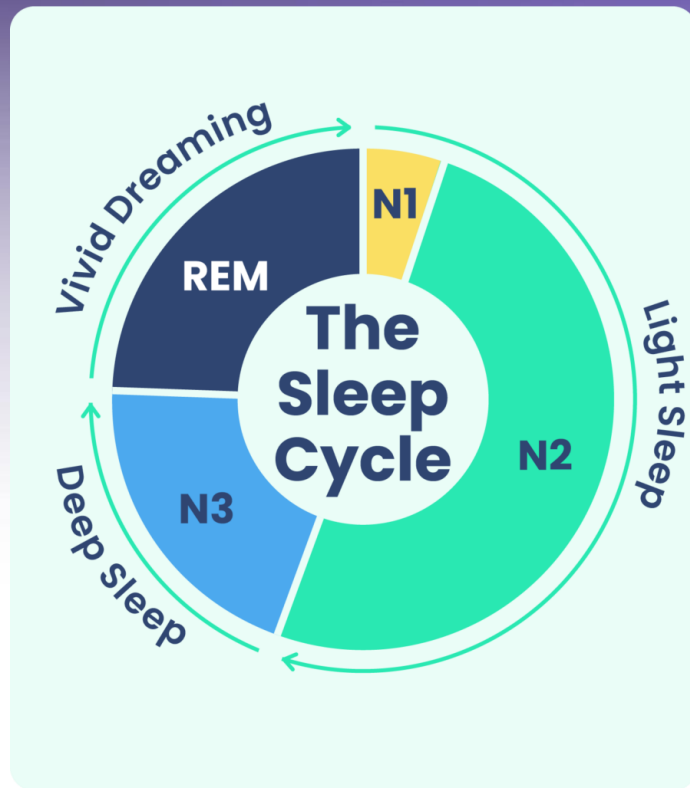
# Why we sleep...



Sleep is an active process for mind and body. We need sleep for:

- Energy conservation
- Thermoregulation
- Regulation of metabolism
- Immune function
- Cell renewal and repair
- Consolidation of new memory and learning
- Improves cognitive function (↑ concentration, motivation, reaction times, decision making)
- Regulation of mood (↑ positivity and patience, reactive stress system and irritability)

# Stages of Sleep



- 1 sleep cycle = around **90 minutes-110mins**
- A typical night's sleep usually consists of **five cycles**,
- Sleep is not a simple 'on/off' mechanism like a light switch. **It is more like a dimmer switch**, our brain goes from fully alert (awake) to different stages of consciousness
- **Non-rem sleep** = deep, restorative, relaxation and bodily repair
- **REM sleep** = dream, cognitive functions(learning, memory, creativity)
  - REM sleep **increases with each cycle while non-rem sleep decreases**
- If you have not slept well the night before, your **brain automatically tries to catch up the next night** by sending you into deeper sleep stages more quickly

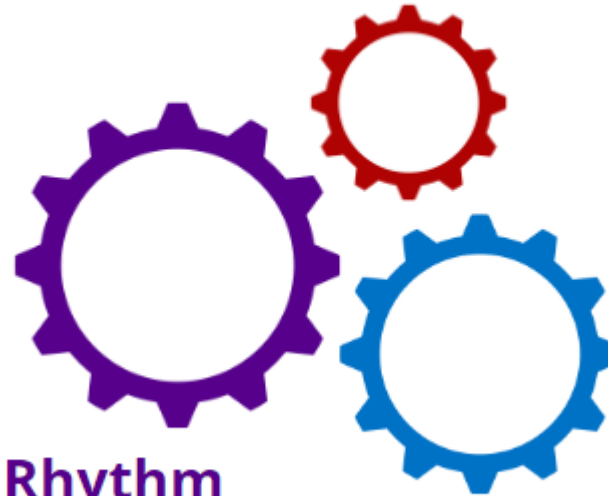
# What Drives Our Sleep

A result of our Nervous System activating fight/flight in response to threats (real or perceived). Our stress response triggers both physiological and cognitive changes that can impede sleep.

## Cortisol and Adrenaline Hyperarousal

Your “ 24hr internal biological clock” that responds to external cues in your environment (sunrise and sunset) to influence what times of day you are driven to fall asleep and feel wakeful

Morning lark vs Night Owl  
(Chronotypes)



Your sleep drive can be thought of as a balloon that gradually fills up during your waking hours, pushing you to fall asleep which then slowly deflates during sleep.

Longer wakefulness, mental/physical effort, activated immune system = increased Adenosine (sometimes referred to as energy currency)

## Circadian Rhythm



Melatonin

## Sleep Pressure

Adenosine



# What Drives Our Sleep: Sleep Pressure



Caffeine has a similar structure to adenosine so it can stop adenosine from binding to receptors in the brain.

This stops us from feeling tired and drowsy

Try to time your last shot of caffeine fix – 8-10 hrs before bedtime

Caffeine crash = adenosine floods the receptors



Napping can help improve cognitive abilities and boost energy levels

Sleep is sleep and when we nap this too will naturally reduce our sleep pressure (adenosine)

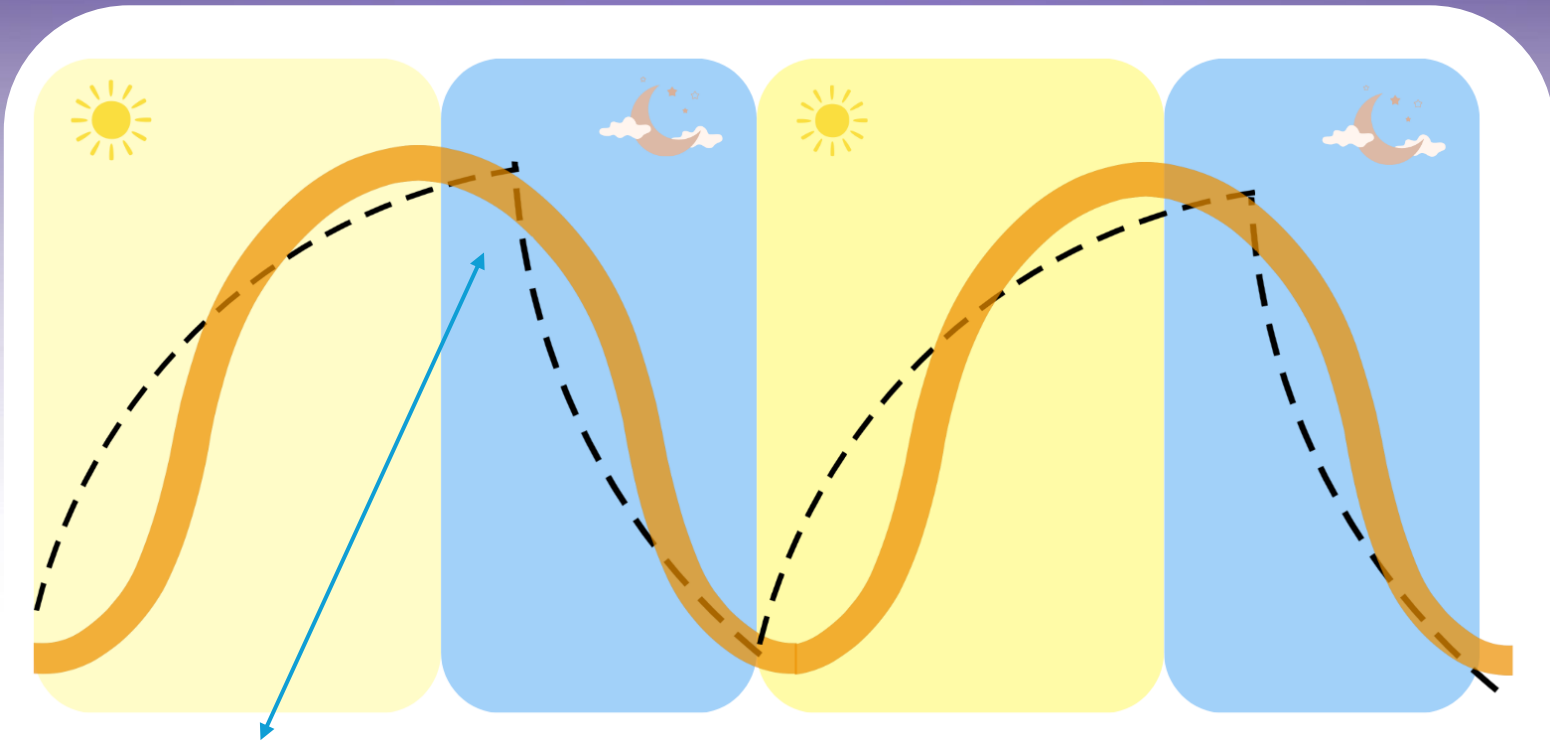
Only nap for 20-30 minutes, and try to do this early afternoon (1-3pm)



# What Drives Our Sleep: Circadian Rhythms

Circadian  
Rhythm

**Sleep  
Pressure**



Kheirinejad et al. 2023,  
smartphone use in bed  
showed to have a  
significant adverse  
effect on sleep

## Melatonin (The Hormone of Darkness)

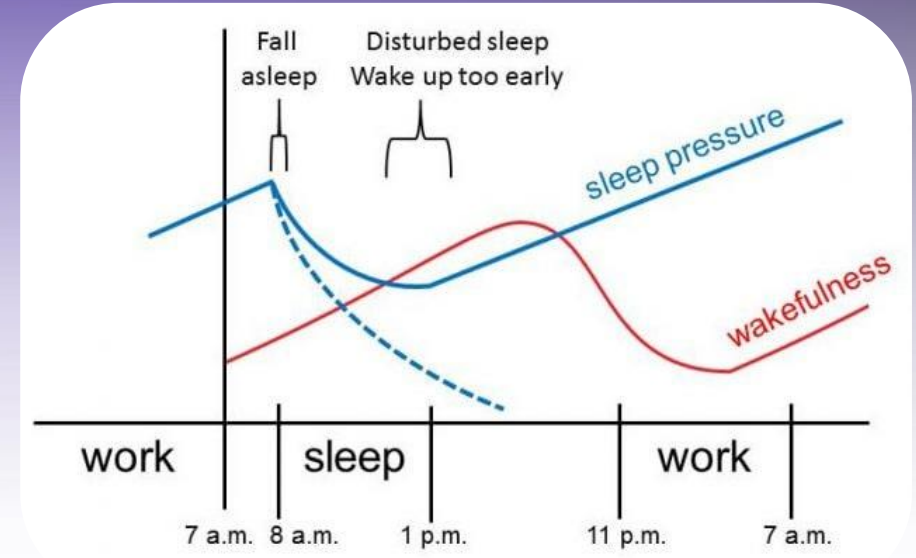
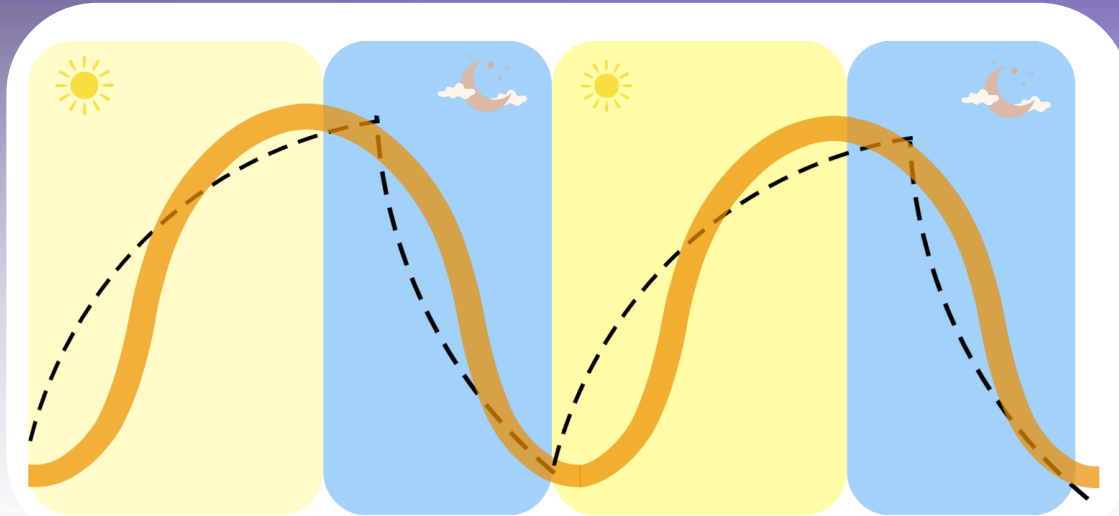
Avoid artificial or blue light in the evening to maximise melatonin production (↑ sleepiness)

Use natural light in the morning to help suppress melatonin (↓ sleepiness)

# Working Night Shifts

Circadian Rhythm

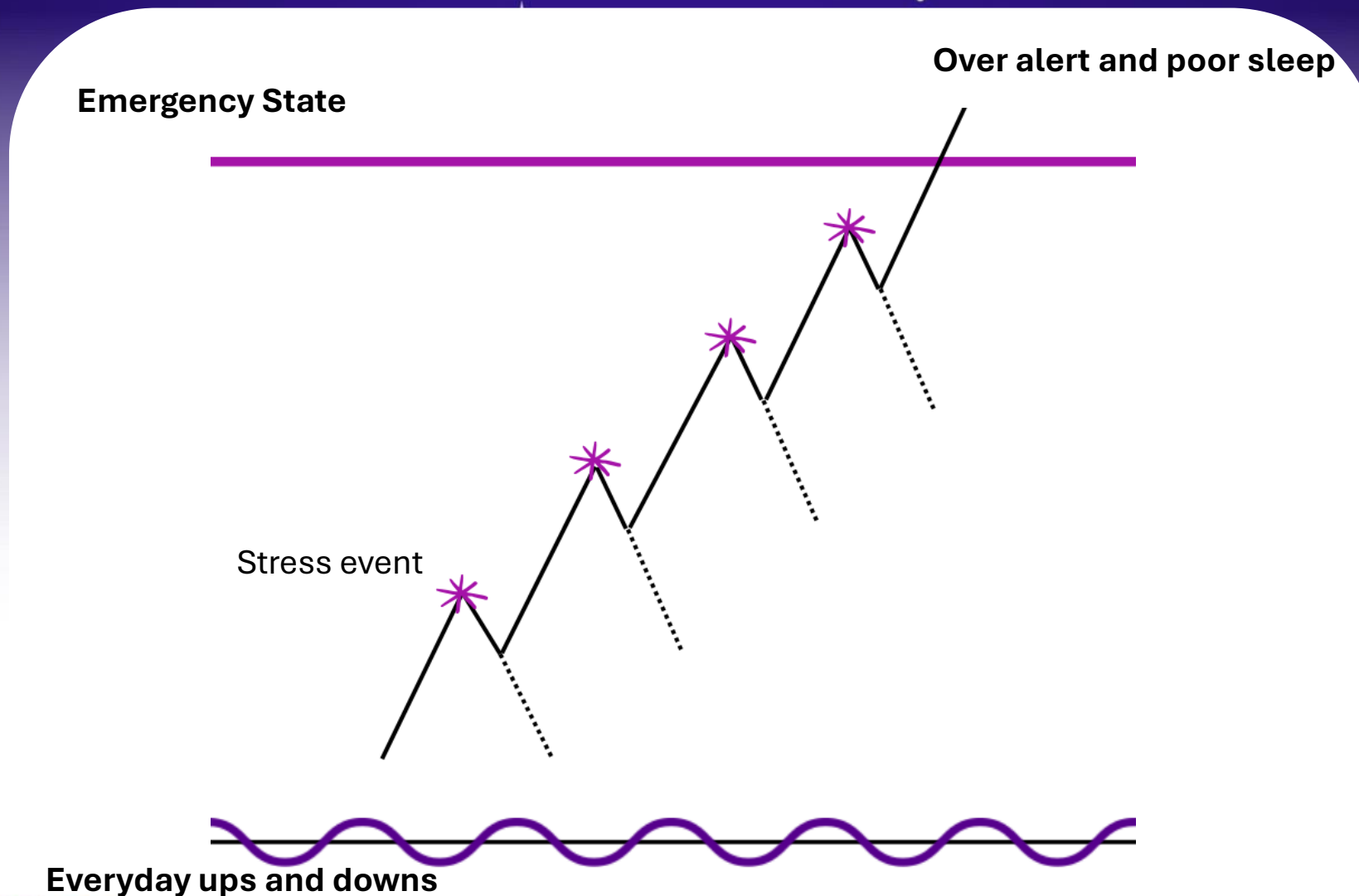
Sleep Pressure



Shift work can lead to a desynchronisation of the sleep pressure drive and circadian rhythms

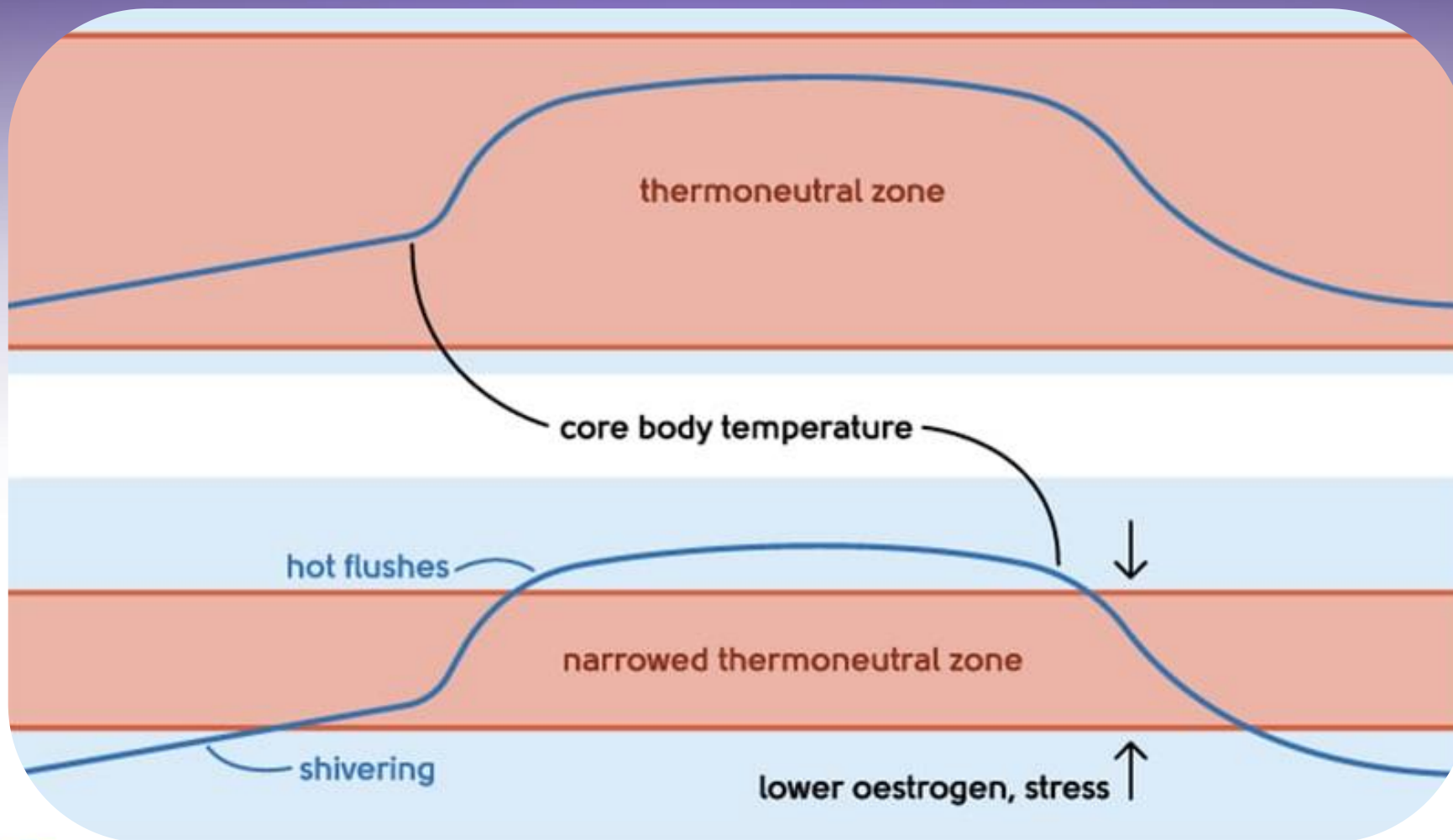
Sleep pressure continues to rise while the worker is asleep at night, and therefore may fall asleep quickly in morning after their shift. But this sleep is vulnerable to disturbance and may wake early as the circadian rhythms that drive wakefulness are increasing. Because of insufficient rest, the sleep pressure will not decrease fully causing fatigue and tiredness

# What Drives Our Sleep: Hyperarousal

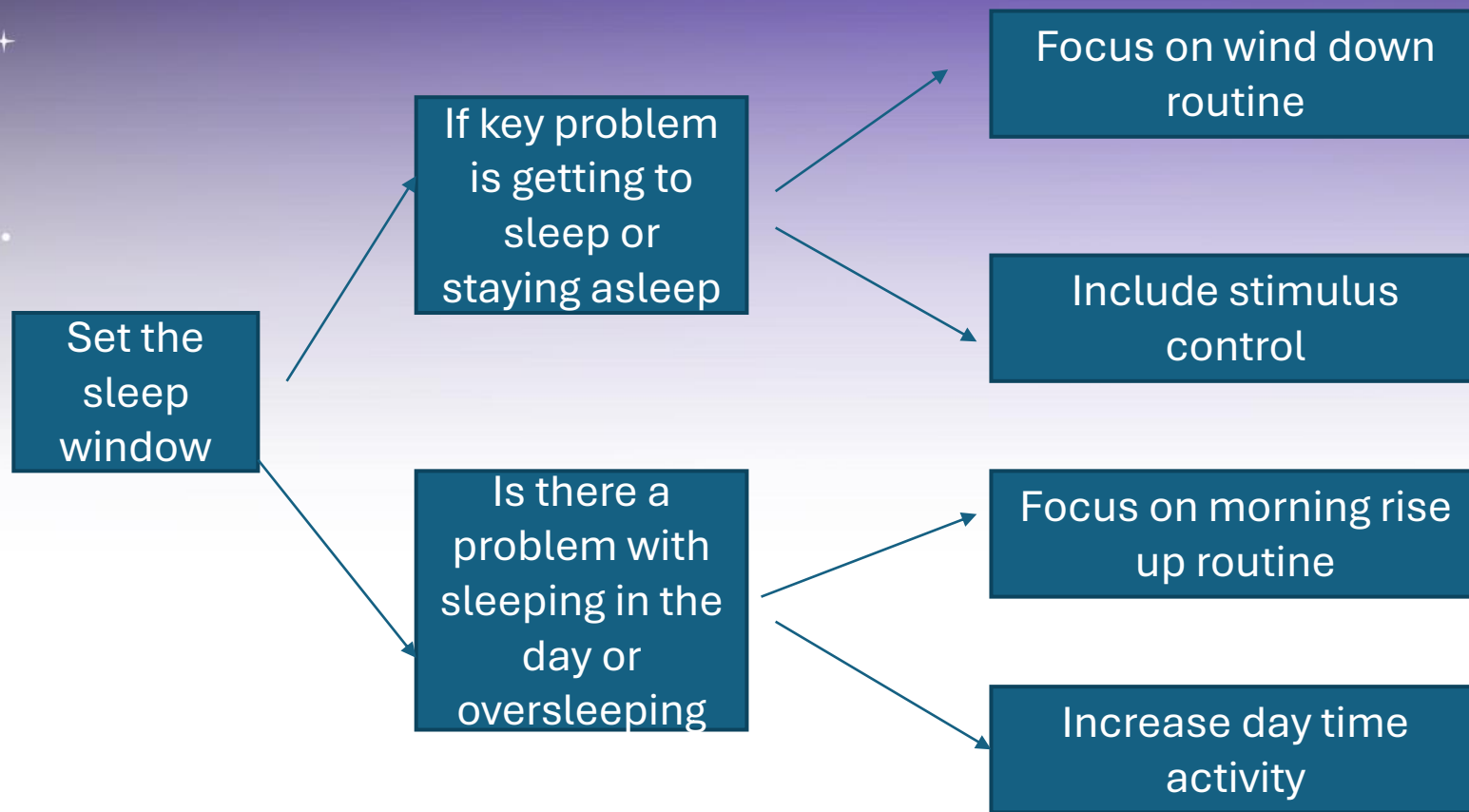


# Physiological mechanisms: what happens during a hot flush?

Hot flush thresholds with and without symptoms



# Assessing Sleep



Sleep window = the ideal amount of time you'd like/need to be asleep

This should be established, maintained and prioritised around other routines (even at weekends!)

Use sleep diaries to track sleep patterns and changes

**Moving approximately an hour a week in the desired direction (10 mins each day)**

# Preparing for Sleep: Winding Down

- Routine that start **60-90 minutes before sleep**

This involves slowing down, reducing overly stimulating activities and starting your nightly routine (cleaning your teeth, getting in night clothes, relaxing activities). Be mindful of activities that may stimulate your F/F response (e.g. locking up, emails, bills)

What are your relaxing and restoring activities?  
Do you need to introduce new ones?

- **We can ONLY control wakefulness NOT sleep**

The more you force sleep the more anxious and frustrated you will feel, making it harder to drift off. Our body cannot sleep if it feels unsafe and under threat.



# Preparing for Sleep: Sleep Environment

Keep the bedroom dark



Reduce use of TV/laptops



Cool temperature (16-18°C.)



Reduce noise



Reduce screen time



Season appropriate bedding



natural fibres for temp reg

Clean, calm and safe environment



Comfortable bed/mattress topper



Low lighting



# Preparing for Sleep: Relaxation

- Can be used before bed or if you are prone to waking in the night. The aim of relaxation isn't to fall asleep, as this is an unconscious process beyond our direct control. Instead, it is used to cultivate feelings of safety that allow our bodies to enter the vulnerable state of sleep.

- Mindfulness
- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Safe place visualisation
- Breathing practices
- Appreciation / gratitude practices – orientating the mind to what's going well – what's safe
- Reading/podcast/audio book/ sleep story (mindful of content)
- If you use a HR monitor or activity tracker it can be helpful to see your efforts
- Positive statements; 'This won't impact me as much as I think it will')

Like any skill, emotional regulation practises often become more effective with repetitive and intentional practise





# Preparing for Sleep: Journalling

It's natural to reflect on your day before sleep – but this needs putting to rest

Set aside 20 minutes to do this, thinking about what you have done and how you feel about it.

Write down any worries, 'to dos' for tomorrow and finish with something you are grateful for.

The more consistently you engage in reflective journaling, the more effective it becomes in helping you release daily concerns and embrace a more restful state before sleep.

Follow this with something grounding or a relaxing activity.



# Preparing for Sleep: Bed Association

Our bed should be the cue for sleep. If we spend significant amounts of time lying in bed awake then we will link this space with wakefulness and frustration. Following the advice below will help retrain the mind that bed is for sleep.

Use your bed for sleep only!

Only go to bed when you are tired

Stick to a regular sleep/wake times. Avoid going to bed early to compensate for a bad night, this can be paradoxical if we lie awake leading to feelings of frustration

If you cannot sleep after 15 mins get up out of bed and do a relaxing activity (no electronics)

# Responding Calmly to a Night Sweat

COOL DOWN → BREATH → CALM THOUGHTS → RELAX AND RETURN TO BED

Using routine and automatic responses to night sweats to help you to manage nighttime waking

1. Calmly get up and do whatever you need to **cool down**:

Dry off with a towel/kitchen roll, change bed clothes, sip water to cool and hydrate yourself, splash cool water on your face/pressure points.

Try to have things nearby to reduce excess activity and reduce exposure to bright lights

Ref: Myra Hunter and Melanie Smith:  
Managing Hot Flushes and Night Sweats

# Responding Calmly to a Night Sweat

COOL DOWN → BREATH → CALM THOUGHTS → RELAX AND RETURN TO BED

**2. Practise paced breathing and calming techniques** to soothe our body and reduce our stress response (Fight/Flight) and body temperature.

Breathwork : box breathing, belly breathing (diaphragmatic breathing), alternate nostril breathing, humming bee breath, butterfly hug techniques.

Anxiety Grounding techniques : 54321 technique, Body scan, find a soothing scent/essential oil, focus on grounding down through your feet, touch comforting or cold items (blankets, stone, cool water), gentle stretches.

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# Responding Calmly to a Night Sweat.

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3. Bring awareness to your thoughts... Some thoughts can be upsetting and cause us to become restless and agitated that may prolong and intensify the experience.

Remember thoughts are NOT facts, is there any alternative, balanced or compassionate perspectives instead?

“This is really hard for me right now, but the hot flush will pass”

“I am safe, I will be okay, they will gradually reduce in time”

“Everyone, (especially those with night sweats) will have a poor night’s sleep occasionally”

“My body will make up for lost sleep in time and my body’s natural rhythm will support me the next day.”

“Realistically I’ll be able to function ‘well enough’, I can get on with normal things even if I don’t sleep as well””

Mindfulness/Cognitive Diffusion Techniques can help us detach from unhelpful thoughts without engaging or overidentifying with them

E.g. Leaves on a Stream meditation, Clouds in the sky, Cars passing on a road

Ref: Myra Hunter and Melanie Smith:  
Managing Hot Flushes and Night Sweats

# Responding Calmly to a Night Sweat

COOL DOWN → BREATH → CALM THOUGHTS → RELAX AND RETURN TO BED

## 4. Relax and get back into bed.

Stop clock watching “oh no its 2am; oh no its 3am”

Be aware of your thoughts but don't engage, focus on a grounding and soothing stimuli

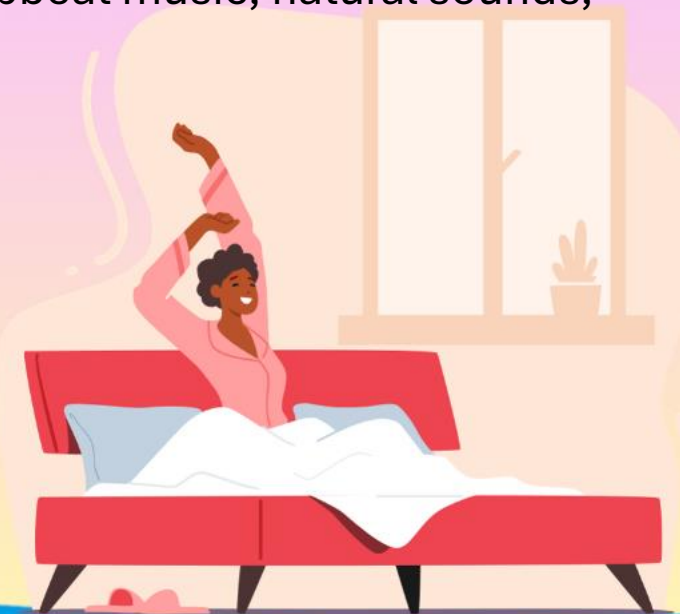
e.g. your breath, touch, smell, sound (soothing nature sounds, sleep stories), mindfulness etc

Ref: Myra Hunter and Melanie Smith:  
Managing Hot Flushes and Night Sweats

# Rise Up Routine

Groggy, morning blues is a natural part of waking up and is something called **sleep inertia** (<30mins). It is common to feel dazed or fuzzy. Our cognitive abilities are not optimal during this time so try to reduce judging the quality of you sleep during this time and assume this feeling will be with us all day. E.g. “I woke last night so I’ll feel terrible all day”

- Getting up at the same time
- Avoid snoozing
- Start the day – have a rise up routine. (make the bed / shower/ get dressed etc upbeat music, natural sounds, or essential oils may also support a morning wakefulness association)
- Open the curtains and expose yourself to sunlight when possible
- Gentle physical activity



# Daytime Routine

- Incorporate regular physical activities, 150mins of moderate/75mins of higher intensity (support sleep pressure and mood), try to reduce high intensity workouts close to bedtime.
- Stress management and general self-care (physical, mental and emotional)
- Try to continue with daily plans, cancelling may result in more tiredness as your attention is focused on your sleep disruption. Instead try pacing activities to reduce boom/bust cycles.
- Nutrition:
  - Balanced diet, regular meals, stay hydrated
  - Limit alcohol and nicotine intake (stimulates nervous system )
  - Limit caffeine intake (tea/coffee/fizzy/energy/chocolate)
  - Tryptophan rich foods (e.g. beans, lentils, nuts, eggs, dairy. Try pairing with a carb to support absorption)

We are all very individual, so use a symptom diary to track how lifestyle changes can impact your sleep, health and wellbeing





# Helpful Reminders and Summary

Start small and be consistent: Better sleep often comes because of small lifestyle changes.

Be patient: It may take time to see improvements in sleep

We can only control wakefulness not sleep, consider things within your direct control to stack the odds in your favour:

- Keep a regular sleep schedule

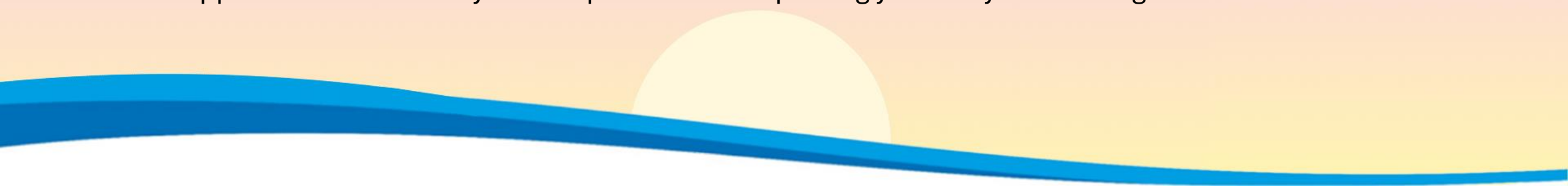
- Plan effective Nightly Winddown and Morning Rise Up Routines

- Be mindful of associations, bed=sleep

- Use your daily routines and lifestyle to support better sleep

Stress management and relaxation is very important for soothing our threat system, cultivating safety and reducing the impact of night sweats

Get support from services if your sleep issues are impacting your daily functioning and mental health.






# Upcoming: CBT For Menopause

Sign up for our new 6  
week course

 QMC Wellbeing Room

 From 5th November

 Sign up by contacting  
[nuhnt.staffwellbeing@nhs.net](mailto:nuhnt.staffwellbeing@nhs.net)



The screenshot shows the Sleepful app website interface. At the top right, there is a navigation menu with links: "Download the App", "Contact Us", "About Sleepful", "Meet the Team", and "Login". The main heading is "Effective Treatment for Insomnia" with the tagline "Start sleeping better, start feeling better". Below this, there are two buttons: "Sleep Assessment" and "Sign Up". The "Sleepful" logo is prominently displayed in the center, with the tagline "Helping you Sleep" underneath it.



**Headspace (FREE FOR NHS)** - stories, meditation, sleep sounds, wind downs, kids and parents, guide to sleep. SLEEP SOS videos

**YouTube** – many different sleep meditations, body scans, visualisations,

**FREE Sleep Diary:** [SleepFoundation\\_SleepDiary.pdf](#)

**Sleepful:** Free CBT-informed sleep guided programme

# Your NUH Wellbeing Programme

## Mental Health Support

- 24/7 Confidential Employee Assistance Programme 'Health Assured' 0800 028 0199
- Counselling via Occupational Health
- Mental Health Sessions & Workshops for All Staff
- Sleep Quality Seminars
- Mindfulness Courses
- Mental Health Training For Staff & Managers
- Spiritual & Pastoral Care
- Staff Support Networks - LGBTQIA+, Staffability, PINC
- Mental Health and Mindfulness Apps
- Addiction Support



**We Can Help With...**

## Financial Wellbeing Support

- Financial Wellbeing Toolkit
- Serve and Protect Credit Union
- Salary Finance Loans through a salary sacrifice scheme, and Free Educational Resources through Salary Finance
- Travel to work discounts
- Health Assured Financial & Legal Advice



## Physical Health Support

- Onsite Health Checks
- Staff Gym at QMC
- Weight Management Courses
- Cycle to Work Scheme
- Couch To 5K
- Staff Physiotherapy
- Menopause Awareness & Support
- Nutrition Workshops & Seminars



To find out more about the staff wellbeing services, visit:



[www.nuh.nhs.uk/staff-wellbeing](http://www.nuh.nhs.uk/staff-wellbeing)



[nuhnt.staffwellbeing@nhs.net](mailto:nuhnt.staffwellbeing@nhs.net)



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Nottingham  
University Hospitals  
NHS Trust

Sleep well everyone and we hope to see  
you again soon...

We would love your feedback!

