



December 2022: Better Sleep



“The amount of seep required by the average person is five minutes more.” – Wilson Mizener

Welcome to the **December 2022 edition of TotalWellbeing**, your guide to the **[8 dimensions of wellbeing](#)**. This month we are looking at something we can all relate to, getting better sleep!

Sleep is something that we all could probably use a little more of. Work responsibilities, stress, too much screen time at night, personal obligations, and even fun events or activities can all be reasons we go to bed late or have trouble falling asleep in a reasonable time. Good sleep is all about setting good sleep habits and remaining diligent. Things like always going to bed at the same time every night, making sure to not spend time right before bed looking at blue-light filled electronic screens, or refraining from drinking alcohol or caffeine too late in the day. These habits can be hard to start but once you do you will find that your sleep will improve and with it, your daily energy, positive attitude, attention span, memory, and more will flourish! To help, check out the tips below.

Remember that your EAP is here for you if you need to address sleep issues, be it with yourself or even a young child that is having sleep problems, or just need to talk to someone. You have access to free and confidential counseling, wellness coaching, parental coaching for those with children, trainings, and more. Plus, an online resource library full of proactive self-help tools! Visit [PersonalAdvantage](#) for helpful articles, personal development tools, free mindfulness app, and more!

To your total wellbeing,

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Developing Good Sleep Habits

Many people struggle with both the quantity and the quality of sleep they get each night. Your sleep habits can impact all areas of your life, so it is important to find a routine that works for you. Most of us realize that sleep is important, but do we realize just how important it is? In his 2019 TED Talk, sleep scientist Matt Walker, PhD put it succinctly: "The shorter your sleep, the shorter your life."

In 1900, the average American adult slept nine hours per night. Today, it's less than seven (National Institutes of Health). When one does not get enough quality sleep, there are many physical, emotional, and neurological effects, including a compromised immune system, increased irritability, difficulty learning new information, and many more. Here are some techniques to help you improve your sleep routine to ensure you feel well rested each morning.

Be Mindful of How Substances Affect Sleep

If you have difficulty getting a good night's sleep or never wake up feeling well rested, then consider how various substances could be affecting your sleep. Many people believe caffeine helps them power through the day and that a glass of wine is beneficial for winding down at night. However, both caffeine and alcohol can decrease the amount of restorative deep sleep you get.

Another substance to consider is sugar, particularly processed sugar, which can cause hyperactivity. It can ultimately create a vicious cycle: you consume sugary foods, you don't sleep well, and then you wake up hungry for more sugar. Author Shawn Stevenson said, "A tired brain is a hungry brain." Try cutting out or down on sugar throughout the day and don't eat for two hours before bedtime.

Get into a Sleep Routine

An important aspect of developing good sleep habits is figuring out a routine that works for you, or establishing regularity, as Walker refers to it. Try to wake up and go to sleep at the same time every day, even on the weekends. Another aspect to incorporate into your sleep routine is keeping your environment on the cooler side. Most of us can relate to tossing and turning in bed on a hot summer's night or when the AC isn't working. A cooler room is much more conducive to a good night's sleep because our core body temperature needs to decrease by a few degrees in order to fall and stay soundly asleep.

Try Stretching

Light stretching before bed can also help settle down your body and mind. Try doing some easy stretches for 10 or 15 minutes. It helps put

you in a relaxed state so you can fall asleep faster and can also improve your quality of sleep.

Write Down Reminders

Some people have a hard time turning off their brains when they are trying to fall asleep. If you notice you are thinking about all the things you need to do tomorrow or keep thinking about what happened today, try writing in a notepad before going to bed. Write down any reminders for yourself so that you can let your mind forget about it until tomorrow.

Minimize Screen Time Before Bed

Do you have a tendency to look at your phone or watch a show before going to bed? Harvard researchers looked at the effect of blue light exposure near bedtime and found that it interferes with melatonin production and affects our circadian rhythm. Try putting screens away a few hours before going to bed, or at least turn the brightness down. If having a device curfew doesn't work for you, try wearing blue light blocking glasses at night or configuring automatic nighttime settings on your devices.

Meditate to Calm Your Mind

Another technique to help calm your mind is meditation. Try sitting in a comfortable position and closing your eyes. Focus on your breath. At first, try sitting still for a few breaths and each night, add a few more breaths until you have worked up to at least a few minutes.

Try Sleep Apps or Music

There are numerous mobile applications geared toward improving sleep, as well as different types of music that can help you relax. Sound machines can be helpful too because they drown out background noises or can even help quiet down your own thoughts.

Make Sure You're Comfortable

Your pillow and mattress can make a big difference in the quality of sleep you get. Experiment with different pillows until you find the right one for you. If your mattress isn't comfortable, consider budgeting to purchase a new one in the near future. You could also consider a mattress topper, which is an economical way of upgrading your mattress without having to buy a new one.

Consult with Your Doctor

If you are having trouble improving your sleep patterns on your own, consult with your doctor for medical advice to properly treat sleep conditions.

Call your EAP!

If you are having trouble improving your sleep patterns and need help, please call MINES and see how we can help with your sleeping habits.

We have counseling, wellness coaching, and self-help tools available. All free, all confidential!

If you need additional information or to access services, please call MINES and Associates at 1-800-873-7138 or visit www.minesandassociates.com today. Also, [PersonalAdvantage](#) has a ton of great resources and FREE [webinars](#) on a variety of topics including sleep.

Sleep Better Knowing Your Finances Are Under Control

Often your sleep suffers when your finances weigh heavy on your mind. To reduce the financial stress that keeps you up at night, you can take small steps to take control of your money and reduce your financial stress.

1. **Create a budget and stick to it.** Once you understand the numbers behind your income and outgo, you can keep an eye on how you're doing. Although ignorance can be bliss in some areas of your life, when it comes to money management, not knowing where you stand can create anxiety and keep you up at night. A money coach can help you put together a realistic budget that you can live with.
2. **Prepare for emergencies.** The more prepared you feel, the better you can sleep. Depending on your situation, fund your emergency fund until you have approximately six months' worth of expenses saved in an easy-to-access account.
3. **Pay down balances to less than 30% of your credit card limits.** When your credit card balances creep past 30% of your limit, your credit score starts to go down and can increase the price you pay for insurance and other expenses. Prioritize paying down your credit cards and sleep more soundly knowing you are taking control of your finances.
4. **Spend money intentionally.** List the things, people and experiences that you value most. Set priorities for your spending by cutting out those expenses that don't make the list. If having coffee with a friend gives you joy, don't cut coffee out. Instead find something that provides less enjoyment to cut back on. Your days will become filled with positive, memorable experiences.
5. **Practice self-care around finances.** Taking control of your finances can be powerful. Commit to spending just 10 minutes a day addressing your finances such as checking account balances, shopping for a lower credit card rate or a higher interest rate savings account, tracking your expenses, or even shopping for a less expensive internet provider. Listen to your favorite music and journal about your finances, learn one new thing a day by

researching a term that you hear often but don't quite understand, or even sign up for a personal finance class just for fun.

6. **Celebrate your wins.** What's measured improves. If your first priority is to pay your credit card off, put it in writing and/or tell your friends about your goal. You can even write your balance on a large piece of paper and post it on your refrigerator and every time you make a payment, take pleasure in your progress by crossing out the old balance and writing in the new, lower balance. Your thoughts and stress levels around finances will improve along with your quality of sleep!
7. **Seek help. Utilize Mines' Employee Assistance Program (EAP) financial counseling benefits for free assistance.** Your EAP can connect you with a financial counselor to help you reduce your financial stress.

Improving your financial situation can help improve your sleep. If you would like assistance, contact MINES for free financial coaching. Michelle Vullo, is an Accredited Financial Counselor with Enrich Finance. She provides free financial counseling sessions for employees eligible for MINES and Associates' EAP services.

If you or a member of your household needs assistance or guidance on any of these wellbeing topics, please call MINES & Associates, your EAP, today for free, confidential, 24/7 assistance at 800.873.7138.

To access past issues of *TotalWellbeing* please visit our [newsletters page](#). This newsletter is aimed at providing helpful information about various aspects of your wellbeing and then connecting it all back to important and relevant parts of everyday life. If you have any thoughts, questions, or content you would like to see covered here please get in contact with us. You can email us directly by clicking [here](#).

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