

A Simple Guide to Better Sleep

Supporting Your Nervous System Through Sleep Hygiene

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1. What Is Sleep Hygiene?

Sleep hygiene refers to the **habits, routines, and environment that support healthy sleep**.

It's not about forcing yourself to sleep or being perfect with a routine. Instead, sleep hygiene is about **creating consistent signals to the body and brain that it's safe to rest**.

This includes things like:

- Having a consistent bedtime
- Limiting stimulation before bed
- Creating a calm sleep environment
- Practicing nervous system regulation

When these habits are practiced regularly, they help your body move into a state where sleep becomes easier.

2. Why Sleep Can Be Hard for Trauma Survivors?

For people with trauma, sleep struggles are extremely common — and it's not a lack of discipline.

Trauma can keep the nervous system stuck in **survival mode (fight, flight, freeze, or fawn)**. When the body has learned that the world isn't safe, it may stay alert even when you're exhausted.

This can show up as:

- Difficulty falling asleep
- Waking frequently during the night

- Feeling “wired but tired”
- Nightmares or vivid dreams
- Hypervigilance at night

During sleep, we become vulnerable. For a nervous system that had to stay alert to survive, **letting go into sleep can feel threatening** even when danger is no longer present.

Sleep hygiene helps retrain the nervous system to recognize signals of safety and rest.

3. Sleep Hygiene Practices for Better Sleep

1. Create a Wind-Down Routine

Your nervous system needs signals that the day is ending.

Try a **30–60 minute wind-down period** before bed.

Helpful options:

- Dim the lights in your home
- Take a warm shower or bath
- Gentle stretching
- Breathwork
- Reading something calming

Over time, this routine helps your body recognize when it’s time to sleep.

2. Reduce Stimulation Before Bed

Screens, stress, and stimulation can keep the brain alert.

Try limiting:

- Social media
- News or stressful content
- Bright lights
- Work emails

If you use your phone at night, lowering brightness or using night mode can help.

3. Keep a Consistent Sleep Schedule

Our bodies run on a **circadian rhythm**, which is the internal clock that regulates sleep.

Try to:

- Go to bed around the same time each night
- Wake up around the same time each morning

Consistency helps train the body to expect sleep.

4. Create a Safe Sleep Environment

Your bedroom should support calm and comfort.

Helpful adjustments:

- Keep the room cool and dark
- Use blackout curtains if needed
- Try white noise or calming sounds
- Use comfortable bedding

The goal is to create an environment your body associates with **rest and safety**.

5. Regulate the Nervous System Before Bed

If your body feels anxious or restless, calming the nervous system can help prepare for sleep.

Try:

- Slow breathing (inhale 4 seconds, exhale 6 seconds)
- Placing a hand on your chest or stomach
- Gentle body scanning
- Lying on the floor and allowing your body to fully relax

These practices help shift the body from **survival mode into rest-and-repair mode**.

6. If You Can't Fall Asleep

If you're awake for a long time:

- Get out of bed
- Do something calming in dim lighting

- Return to bed when you feel sleepy

This helps prevent your brain from associating your bed with frustration or stress.

7. Manage daytime stress

Stress can accumulate over the day which can negatively impact as at night, not to mention if we don't take time to regulate ourselves when stressed during the day, it sets your brain up for rumination at night and have intrusive thoughts plague your mind.

Here are some tips you can use

- Check in with yourself throughout the day and ask yourself how are you doing, and if your feeling overwhelm what self-care can we do?
 - When you feel overwhelmed, notice where the tension is in your body and try box breathing: breathe in for 4 seconds, hold for 4, breathe out for 4, hold for 4. This helps signal safety to your nervous system.
 - Practice self-compassion, stress often worsens when we criticize ourselves. Remind yourself that it's okay to have difficult days and that you're doing your best.
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Reflection exercise

Take a few minutes to reflect on your current sleep habits. Awareness is often the first step toward change.

What are some things you could start doing to improve your sleep hygiene?

What sleep habits are you already doing well?

Are there any habits that may be making sleep more difficult for you?

What is one small change you could try this week to support better sleep?

How does your body usually feel when you wake up in the morning?

A Final Note

If sleep has been difficult for you, it doesn't mean you're doing something wrong.

For many trauma survivors, sleep difficulties are simply the result of a nervous system that learned to stay alert in order to survive.

Healing sleep takes time, patience, and consistent signals of safety. Over time, the body can relearn that rest is safe.

Your nervous system isn't broken — it adapted.

Join the healing community: [Community](#) (Use code community to get the 1st month free)

Website: [Weekstraumarecovery.com](https://www.weekstraumarecovery.com)

Booking link: [Free Consultation](#)

You don't have to do this alone

P.S. Below I have a simple checklist to follow for sleep hygiene, I hope this helps

SLEEP HYGIENE CHECKLIST

20 Habits for Better Sleep & a Calmer Nervous System



1 Limit naps to 20 minutes

Short naps can boost energy, but long naps may disrupt nighttime sleep.



2 Avoid napping if sleep is difficult

If you struggle with insomnia, skipping naps may help your sleep cycle reset.

3 Go to bed at the same time each night

Consistency helps regulate your circadian rhythm.



4 Wake up at the same time each morning

A consistent wake time trains your body when to feel sleepy.



5 Get direct sunlight 15 minutes a day

Natural light in the morning helps regulate your internal clock.



6 If you can't sleep, get out of bed

After ~20 minutes, do something calming in low light.



7 Use your bed only for sleep, sex, or when sick

Avoid working, scrolling, or eating in bed.



10 Exercise during the day



11 Limit caffeine, alcohol, and nicotine

Avoid stimulants 4–6 hours before bed.

12 Eat meals at consistent times

Regular meal timing helps regulate your body's rhythms.

13 Avoid heavy meals before bed

Try to finish eating 2–3 hours before sleeping.



14 Limit drinking water right before bed

This can reduce nighttime wake ups.

15 Avoid intense exercise late at night

Workout earlier in the day if possible.



16 Create an evening wind-down routine,

Reading, stretching, or meditation can help signal sleep.

17 Take a warm bath or shower

This helps the body transition into relaxation.



18 Avoid watching the clock

Clock checking can increase anxiety about sleep.



19 Reduce screen time before bed

Blue light can interfere with melatonin production.

20 Keep your room cool, dark and quiet

Your sleep environment should feel calm and safe.

Better sleep is a habit. Consistent, gentle signals help your body learn to rest with time.

