

Staffordshire University Academies Trust

Mental Health and Wellbeing ♦ Newsletter



Vision and Intent

“To provide a working and learning environment whereby individual and organisational wellbeing is embedded in everything that we do. Creating a healthy, happy, supportive, resilient, and productive workforce who are able to thrive, personally and professionally.

To collectively maximise the positive impact for the children in our care, supporting them to flourish, and to improve their life chances.”

Key Dates

International Day of
Happiness - Friday 20th
March

Autism Acceptance
Month - April

World Health Day -
Tuesday 7th April

World Breathing Day -
Saturday 11th April

Mental Health
Awareness Week -
Monday 11th to Sunday
17th May

International Self Care
Day - Friday 24th July

Grief Awareness Day -
Sunday 30th August

Mental Health and Wellbeing Newsletter

We are pleased to share the sixth edition of our Mental Health and Wellbeing Newsletter with you. Within this newsletter, you will find information regarding:

- International Day of Happiness
- Mental Health Awareness Week
- Mental Health Courses
- Headrest
- Stress Awareness Course
- Children's Mental Health Week
- The Student Subjective Wellbeing Questionnaire
- The Complex with Kimberley Wilson Podcast
- Suicide Prevention at Work
- Mindkind
- My Whole Self 2026
- World Sleep Day
- Seasonal Wellbeing



SUAT is committed to developing and enhancing strategies to support the positive mental health and wellbeing of all staff, who are at the heart of our Trust.

We are pleased to continue our work with the Hub and Trust Mental Health and Wellbeing Hub Leaders, which is to support and provide effective mental health and wellbeing provision across the trust by embedding strategies into our practice in a meaningful and impactful way. The work of the Hub continues and has included:

- Providing resources, support, and information to raise awareness regarding mental health and wellbeing matters, as well as the help available to colleagues.
- Providing a supportive network and supervision for Wellbeing Leads - please don't hesitate to contact our Hub Leaders if you are interested in joining our network!
- Supporting training and CPD opportunities for mental health and wellbeing.
- Providing a listening ear and sharing good practice.

Collectively, we are focused on providing effective mental health and wellbeing support and resources for colleagues to access both inside and outside of the workplace. We hope that you find the information within this newsletter to be both informative and beneficial.

Did you know?

Our Trust has its own hub of support in a range of different areas that colleagues can access **anywhere** and at **anytime** via our website?

The Mental Health and Wellbeing bank of support includes links to find information and help for a wide range of mental health and wellbeing matters. You can access these for yourself, signpost colleagues, parents and other family members who may be looking for support.

The support bank can be accessed and downloaded here: [Wellbeing Bank](#)



International Day of Happiness

Source: The United Nations

Established by the UN in 2012, International Day of Happiness is celebrated every year and recognises happiness for being a fundamental human goal. In fact, the resolution was initiated by the country of Bhutan where they have taken the value of national happiness over national income since the 1970s.

This year, International Day of Happiness fell on Friday 20th March. As with every year, the day looks at promoting wellbeing and mental health, alongside kindness, and sustainable development. The day also brings into focus inclusive development which is really important in schools.

This is a day to be happy so you could write down what makes you and your team or class happy, put those ideas into a box and then pick them out at random to discuss.



The World Happiness Report 2026

On Thursday 19th March, a special live event will share the findings from The World Happiness Report 2026 with a panel including Dr Radha Modgil, Prof. Jan de Neve, Prof. Jonathan Haidt, and Dr Mark Williamson.

The report will feature a ranking of countries based on their average levels of life satisfaction. There will also be a focus on wellbeing in the digital age which will explore the effects of social media.

10 Days of Happiness

To get the most out of this year's International Day of Happiness, try the 10 Days of Happiness programme. Start with some small daily actions to give you a boost as these can all add up to big positive changes and make you feel happier. For your staff room, introduce an ideas box and regularly see which suggestions work best for the group and individuals.

Remember, these are just ideas so they don't need to be huge changes.

Suggestions can include;

- Going outside for a walk
- Reading a book
- Spending time in nature
- Baking some treats
- Meditating
- Calling a friend

Mental Health Awareness Week

Source: The Mental Health Foundation

Hosted by the Mental Health Foundation, Mental Health Awareness Week runs from Monday 11th to Sunday 17th May. This year's theme is Action – promoting real change when it comes to mental health.

Starting with yourself; find one positive action that works for you. This could be meditation, physical activity, or taking time out to get some fresh air.

For someone else, think about those around you and the actions you can take to forge mentally healthy schools and staff offices.

Then, for all of us, the Mental Health Foundation is asking those in power to help ensure good, positive mental health for every UK citizen.

Mental Health Awareness Week helps to prove how mental health is a significant part of our everyday lives. Affecting the things we do, how we do them, everywhere we go and with everyone around us. It's both an integral part of our day to day and takes an active role in our defining moments.

The week offers an opportunity to promote mental wellbeing, instigate conversations, and support those who may be experiencing mental health challenges.

To get involved and become a workplace supporter, visit the Mental Health Foundation [here](#).



Mental Health Courses

Source: [WeFindAnyLearner.com](https://www.wefindanylearner.com)

As long as you were at least 19 years old by August 31st 2025, currently resident in England, and not enrolled in an apprenticeship program, you can register for two free mental health courses.

If you are in a child-facing role, there's the [Children and Young People's Mental Health Level 2 course](#).

This course aims to increase the candidates' knowledge and awareness of children and young people's mental health. Candidates will explore the factors that make an individual more vulnerable to developing mental ill-health as well as the factors that can protect their well-being. Perhaps most importantly, they will look at how the care, compassion, and vigilance of others can support children and young people to bounce back from setbacks and successfully deal with the challenges they may face during their childhood and teenage years.

The modules look at;

- Understanding children and young people's mental health in context,
- Factors which may affect children and young people's mental health,
- Understanding children and young people's mental health concerns,
- The impact of children and young people's mental health concerns, and
- How to support children and young people with mental health concerns

The [Mental Health First Aid Level 2 course](#) aims to explore the topic of mental health in-depth, delving into the various mental health conditions that individuals may face, and understanding how to support and provide appropriate assistance to those who are experiencing mental ill health.

Throughout the course, the essential aspects of creating a mentally healthy environment are covered; identifying risk factors, and offering support and signposting to appropriate resources. Candidates will learn how to approach conversations about mental health, recognize signs of distress, and respond appropriately to individuals experiencing mental health difficulties.

By the end of the course, candidates will have a comprehensive understanding of mental health and how to support individuals experiencing mental ill health, ensuring they are equipped with the knowledge and confidence to help those around them.

Run by [WeFindAnyLearner](https://www.wefindanylearner.com), both courses are delivered online. Thanks to government funding, both courses are free though those funded places will be limited.

Headrest

Headrest offers a free wellbeing telephone support service that is available 24/7, you can call them on 0800 862 0110. There's also an option on their homepage to fill out a form so one of their team can organise a callback. Don't worry, all of it is confidential and anonymous.

Headrest was co-founded in October 2020 by two former headteachers and Multi-Academy Trust CEOs.

Ros McMullen and Andrew Morrish realised that headteachers needed extra support, thus Headrest was created.

The service is run by experienced ex-headteachers on a volunteer basis who should be able to provide expert advice, no matter what the issue is about.



Whatever your concern, they'll be able to provide a safe, sympathetic and confidential listening ear. They are there to listen.

Do note, Headrest do not offer legal advice (a union would be better-equipped for that).

Stress Awareness Course

Offered by The National College

If you want to be able to raise your awareness of stress and how to manage it effectively, [The National College](#) offers a Stress Awareness course. Lasting just over an hour, the course aims to provide participants with the knowledge and skills to recognise the symptoms of stress. Not only that, but develop a level of self-awareness and several management techniques to support your wellbeing.



According to The National College, 17.9m working days were lost in Great Britain in 2024/25 due to work-related stress, depression, or anxiety. That's according to a [report](#) published by the Health and Safety Executive. To remain healthy, happy, and productive, especially in your role at work, it is essential to recognise the signs of stress and then support your own mental wellbeing.

The course contains six modules;

1. What is stress?
2. The signs of stress
3. The cause of stress
4. Stress management and helping yourself
5. Stigma and barriers
6. How to talk about stress

Should you be interested, the course is based on UK legislation and is included in our contract with The National College.

Children's Mental Health Week

Source: Place2Be

Children's Mental Health Week took place from 9th to 15th February, and this year's theme was 'This Is My Place.'

The aim being to support those systems around children and young people, helping them feel that they belong.

This sense of belonging plays a vital role in mental health and wellbeing. For children as individuals, in their friendships and friendship groups, in school, and in their communities.



Establishing that sense of belonging is important for children, as it helps them to feel secure in their environment. This can even be seen as a basic human need with a powerful impact once it's known. Not only for a child's mental health, but their physical health, in relationships, education, and later on in their employment.

To bring about that sense of belonging, schools, families, and communities were encouraged to create nurturing and inclusive environments. Rooms, buildings, and places where children feel they truly belong and can declare that 'This is My Place.'

Student Subjective Wellbeing Questionnaire

During the busy day-to-day of running a school, it can be quite tricky to gain an understanding of what children truly think of their school experience. One way to find out is the Student Subjective Wellbeing Questionnaire (SSWQ).

The questionnaire goes beyond lessons and activities to bring some clear insight into a student's wellbeing.

The evidence-based survey helps to measure:

Joy of Learning - the positive emotions students experience during learning tasks.

School Connectedness – how students feel cared for by others while at school, including their peers and adults.

Emotional Purpose – how much students value their school and academic tasks as meaningful and important.

Academic Efficacy – refers to how students evaluate their academic behaviours as meeting the demands of school effectively.

Schools can use the SSWQ as a reliable means of assessing students' subjective wellbeing, especially with those who might not otherwise talk about it. The questionnaire may only take around three minutes to complete yet can prove invaluable to work out how and where support can have the biggest impact.

Download a free copy of the questionnaire [here](#)

Student Subjective Wellbeing Questionnaire

Here are some questions about what you think, feel, and do at school. Read each sentence and choose the one best answer for how you felt in the past month. Please answer honestly, this is really important - its what you think that matters!

Statements	Almost Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
I get excited about learning new things in class.				
I feel like I belong at my school.				
I feel like the things I do at school are important.				
I am a successful student.				
I am really interested in the things I am doing at school.				
I can really be myself at school.				
I think school matters and should be taken seriously.				
I do good work at school.				

According to the questionnaire's creator, Tyler Renshaw, Associate Professor and Director of Coordination and Curriculum of the School Psychology Specialization, Utah State University

“Student subjective well-being has been shown to correlate positively with achievement (particularly in primary school students) and feeling accepted and fitting in at school (particularly in secondary school students). The SSWQ is a 16-item self-report instrument for assessing youths' subjective wellbeing at school, which has 4 subscales measuring school connectedness, academic efficacy, joy of learning, and educational purpose. School connectedness is linked to levels of anxiety and Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA). Subscale scores can be used as standalone wellbeing indicators or summed to create a Overall Student Wellbeing composite scale.”

Complex with Kimberley Wilson Podcast

For those wanting to learn more about mental health, there's the [Complex with Kimberley Wilson podcast](#) from BBC Sounds.

The series has been running since November 2025 and takes a deep dive into the psychology behind our mental health presented by Kimberley Wilson, a chartered psychologist.

From empathy to attachment, perfectionism to people pleasing; each episode lasts around 30 minutes and explores why we feel certain emotions, how to manage them, and how to steer clear of various misinformation.



Suicide Prevention at Work

With a new British Standard comes new benchmarks for employers. Suicide and the Workplace sets out to address the risk of suicide and its impact in the workplace. This marks an initiative for mental health at work and has been welcomed by charities and mental health organisations. Mental Health First Aid England and Mind heralded it as “an important step forward” for assisting workplaces in how they respond to suicide with clarity, compassion, and confidence.”

The British Standard looks to supply employers with practical and evidence-based recommendations to help them plan, respond, and support those affected by suicide or who are experiencing suicidal thoughts. This approach encompasses culture, policy, training, communication, and postvention.

Toolkits for HR and line managers are available from the [BSI website](#).

My Whole Self 2026

Source: MHFA England



Launched in 2020 by Mental Health First Aid England, My Whole Self is campaigning for culture change to build inclusive, psychologically safe workplaces. This means schools and staffrooms where individuals can speak up, ask questions, be themselves, and share ideas. Celebrating diversities, experiences, and the many perspectives that we all hold. All without fear of negative consequences and being judged.

Once pupils and staff start to feel psychologically safe, they become more engaged, increasingly creative, and more able to perform at their best. In turn, classes and teams collaborate more effectively and a sense of innovation is fostered.

To mark the campaign, My Whole Self Day took place on Tuesday 10th March. This year brought a focus on psychological safety, particularly its impact on performance and productivity.

What is psychological safety?

According to MHFA England, psychological safety has been shown to strengthen productivity, performance, engagement, and retention. At its core, psychological safety is about trust and respect.

It means:

- Colleagues listen without judgement
- Leaders model openness and vulnerability
- People feel safe to admit mistakes, ask questions, and challenge ideas
- All voices are encouraged to contribute

Are You Mindkind?

Staffordshire County Council's Learning Net has its very own mental health hub and an accompanying campaign.

Mindkind sets out to raise awareness of everyone's mental health and to challenge any stigma that goes with it. There are various resources available to improve, and then maintain, good wellbeing and establish a positive feedback loop.

One is the **Five Ways to Wellbeing**; five positive actions that a group can undertake.

This begins with 'Take Notice' - offering support to those who seem to be struggling and being aware of what you and those around you are feeling. For handy tips on how to approach talking about mental health, there's the [Take 10 Together guidance](#), available as a handy pdf document.

Next is 'Be Active' – simple physical activity to reduce stress and lift an individual's mood.

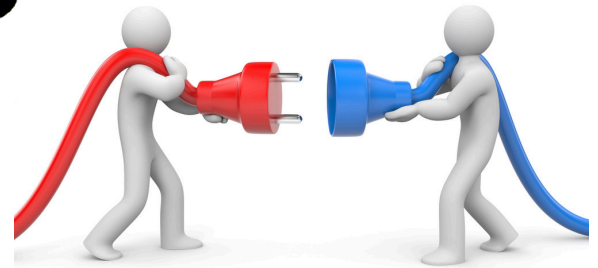
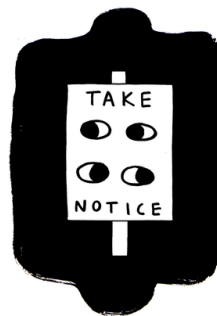
The third step is 'Connect' – with those around you or making new connections to create close personal ties.

The penultimate step is to 'Give' – whether that be daily acts of kindness, volunteering, or sharing skills and knowledge.

Finally, 'Keep Learning' – new training, a new instrument or hobby.



To increase your awareness of Mindkind, visit the Mindkind page on the council's Learning Net [here](#).



World Sleep Day

Hosted by World Sleep Society



Getting a good night's sleep is one of the best ways to look out for your wellbeing. Not only will you be relaxed and ready for the day ahead, but healthy, quality sleep has also been found to improve an overall quality of life. We spend around a third of our lives sleeping, so it's something we should invest in.

Sleep remains one of the most vital foundations for both our mental and physical wellbeing. However, due to our own individual lives, many struggle to get the requisite forty winks. In fact, according to Nuffield Health, the average night's sleep may last just five hours.

Different Durations for Different Age Groups

It may not be as simple as getting to bed early as an individual's sleep health will be unique to them. For instance, adolescents and teenagers often develop a resistant to sleep pressure meaning that they find it easier to stay up later. Their circadian phase also becomes delayed, so they feel comfortable staying awake until later in the evening and sleeping later into the morning.

Different age groups require different amounts of sleep. Unsurprisingly, it's newborns (up to three months old) who require the most at between 14 and 17 hours. Next up is infants (four to 12 months) who, alongside a naptime, should get between 12 and 16 hours of sleep. Those aged from one year to five, should get around 10 to 14 hours of sleep, including naptime.

School children between the ages of six and 12 should be getting between nine and 12 hours of sleep. Teenagers require less sleep, between eight and 10 hours. Then it's adults who require even less sleep, from just seven to nine hours every night.

World Sleep Day

Key Factors

Generally, key factors to consider for sleep, alongside our age are our health, and our personal circumstances. Each one will influence how much sleep we need and how often we get a good night's sleep. It's also important to consider, not just how much sleep we need to function well, but establishing a good night and sleep routine to enable that trip to slumber more easily.

Other factors that can prevent you from gaining a good night's sleep include;

- Our own mental health and wellbeing
- The bedroom environment (the amount of light and noise)
- Pets and children that disrupt your sleep
- Caffeine and alcohol intake, particularly in the evening hours



Restorative Sleep

It is worth noting that sleep should be considered as restorative. A time when your body and mind are, not just resting, but repairing. The idea of a good, restorative night's sleep essentially comes from the periods of deep sleep and REM (rapid eye movement) sleep. If you manage to gain a restorative sleep, it should be continuous from when you fell asleep, to when you woke up.

We tend to experience our deepest sleep during the first third of our night (also known as non-REM sleep stage 1), which is when most of our body repair and restoration takes place. Your body then switches between non-REM stages 2 and 3, with REM sleep featuring in between with the added bonus of a possible dream state. Each cycle lasts between 90 minutes and two hours so you can expect four or five cycles per night, if you are getting those eight hours of sleep.

You can spend a full eight hours in bed and still not achieve a restorative night's sleep. That might mean feeling tired and groggy during the day, finding it difficult to focus on your daily tasks and make decisions, taking longer to recover from physical exertion and illness, and, mood swings with increased irritability.

Failure to get a restorative night's sleep can also act as both an indicator and cause of poor mental health. Consequently, if your mental health is poor then that can affect the quality of your sleep and a poor night's sleep can impact your daily mental health. Should your mind not recover from the day, it might struggle with the day ahead.

Once you gain an understanding of how disrupted sleep patterns can impact your mental health, you should start looking out for your sleep health.

World Sleep Day

Your Sleep Health

To consider the quality of our sleep health, you can break it down into six components.

These include;

- **Duration:** How long you managed to sleep
- **Efficiency:** How easy it was to fall asleep and then stay asleep
- **Regularity:** Whether your bedtime routine is consistent and whether you get up at the same time each morning
- **Timing:** When you begin your bedtime routine and actually sleep
- **Alertness:** Are you focused and alert during the day?
- **Quality:** Are you pleased with your sleep quality and duration?



As with a lot of things, it's quality, not quantity that you should be looking for. While getting to bed at a reasonable time is worth considering, making sure you get a good night's sleep should be prioritised.

According to the [National Sleep Foundation](#), there are four different elements to a good night's sleep.

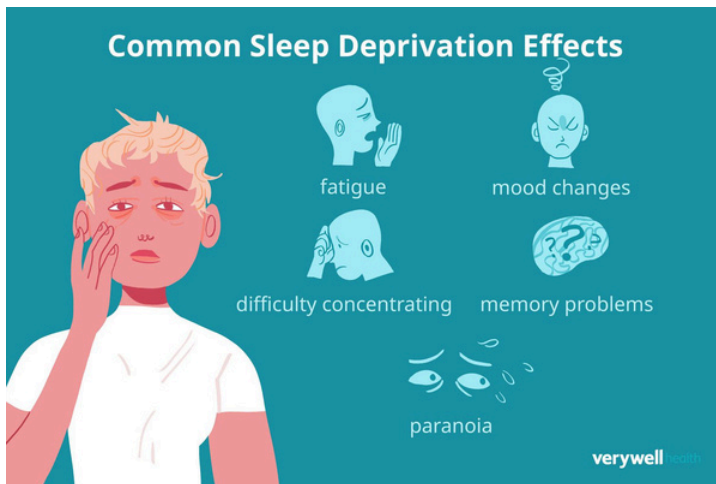
These include;

- **Sleep Latency** – How long it took you to fall asleep
- **Awakenings** – How often you woke up during the night
- **Wake After Sleep Onset** – How long you are awake after first getting to sleep
- **Sleep Efficiency** – How long you spend asleep compared to how long you spend lying in bed trying to sleep

World Sleep Day

How To Improve Your Sleep Health

The longer you spend enduring nights of poor sleep, the more it feels like you are stuck in a doom loop. This continuous cycle can impair your cognition and adversely impact you emotionally, increasing the risk to your mental health. Common sleep deprivation side effects include fatigue, mood changes, difficulty concentrating, memory problems, and even paranoia. Thankfully, there are ways that you can improve your sleep health.



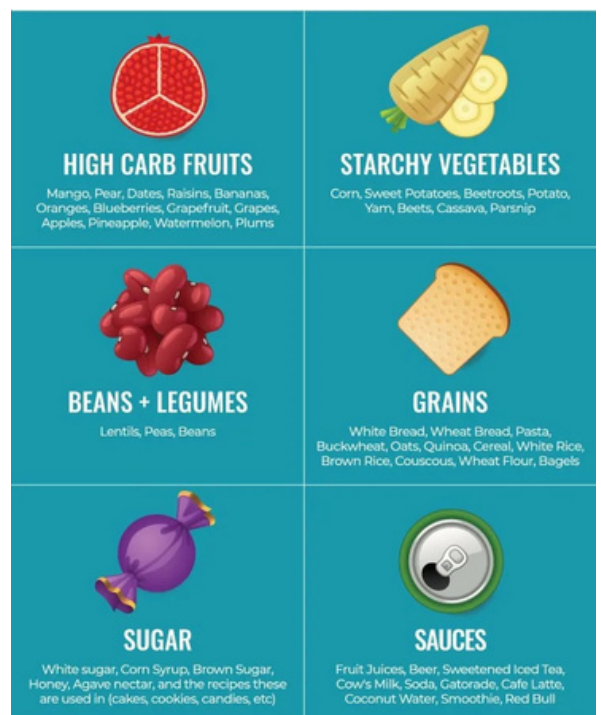
Think about how you typically spend your evenings, both during the week and at the weekend. Do you have a set routine for when you eat and what types of food you eat for your evening meal?

Research has shown that eating and drinking further away from your typical bedtime reduces the odds of waking up shortly after getting to sleep. If your body is busy digesting your evening meal, it's not able to get to such a restful state that sleep becomes straightforward.

Part of this problem is how connected your brain and your gut are. Carbohydrate-heavy foods are also increasingly problematic as these prove harder for your digestive system to break down, thus making it harder for your brain to switch off. If you do opt for a heavier meal, give your digestive system more time to work through it.

If you have kids, do you have a set time for when they go to bed?

Making sure that your children get to sleep is key to making sure that you yourself can get to sleep. Certainly, the sleep rhythms of a baby differ from those of a child and teenager so you can expect to be waking up more often during the night. If you can, try and get into a routine where your kids know when they need to go to bed and try to make them stick to it (sometimes easier said than done). Once they have retreated to their bedroom, you can relax yet how you relax can also be crucial to gaining a good night's sleep.



World Sleep Day

Do you opt for a couple of hours watching television, enjoying a hot bath, reading, or scrolling through your smartphone?

It's not so much how you spend those final hours before bed that matter, rather how much of that time is spent staring at a screen. A couple of hours watching a TV show you've been looking forward to all day will seem like a reward after a busy day working with children. Alternatively, soaking in a hot bath can promote a stronger urge to sleep. Not by rising your body temperature, but the cooling after will help trick your body into believing you have gone from daytime to night.

Other stress-reducing techniques include yoga exercises, meditation, and deep breathing to calm your body and mind.



Possibly the best way to spend those final few minutes before sleep is to turn away from a screen.

Turn off the television and put your mobile phone away. If having a hot bath tricks your body the right way, staring at a screen has the adverse effect.



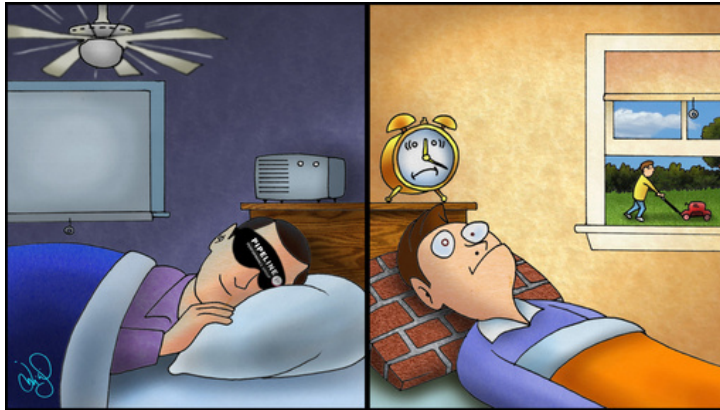
The blue light from screens is bright enough to mimic sunlight, sending a signal to your brain to keep you alert and awake. Your brain will be told to stop feeling sleepy (even late at night) and it will stop producing melatonin. The end result is your brain and body finding it harder to switch off, lengthening the time it takes to fall asleep.

If you can, try to read a book until you feel tired and ready for sleep.

World Sleep Day

Is your sleep environment the best it could be?

Most of us tend to sleep better when our sleep environment is optimised, which may break down into different conditions for different people. However, looking to create a space that's dark, cool, and as quiet as possible should be ideal. These conditions should reduce the risk of any disruption to your sleep cycle.



A great way to promote a good night's sleep is finding out what works. Grab a piece of paper and write out your routine for a week.

- **How each day went**, i.e. make a note if you felt stressed when you got home and include why you felt stressed, especially if it's something that happens often which you can look to correcting over time. Share your thoughts and worries with someone you trust to help reduce that anxiety that may be preventing you from sleeping.
- **What you had for your evening meal**. If you typically have carbohydrate-heavy foods, opt for lighter meals and see if that helps you get to sleep easier.
- **How you spent your evening**. Try to note down your screen-time, i.e. how long it was and the timeslots you watched television, went to the cinema or scrolled on your phone. Try to reduce your screen-time, or at least push it to earlier in the evening.
- **What time you started getting ready for bed**. This can include when you put your children to sleep, loaded the dishwasher, prepared your lunch for the following day, brushed your teeth, and what time you turned off the bedroom light.
- **How you'd judge your night's sleep** – Crucial factors to consider vary from whether you fell asleep inside half an hour to how many times you woke up, and how long you spent asleep in bed.

Look back at your notes and try to judge what worked, and what didn't. There should be elements of your bedtime routine you can alter to see if they help you gain a better understanding of what it takes to get a good night's sleep. Once you work that out, stick to it so your slumber really helps your wellbeing.

Seasonal Wellbeing

Spring has sprung. The nights have begun to get lighter, daffodils are in full bloom and Easter will soon be upon us. With more sunlight available, it's a great opportunity for a Spring Reset.

There are plenty of ways to embark on some self care in Spring.

If you have some outdoor space, start planting some seeds. You could begin your own herb garden or simply set aside some room for a few bright flowers.

Even without that outdoor space, you can introduce a new houseplant into your work environment or living space. Just make sure you don't forget to water it regularly.

If possible, do away with your devices and spend some time in nature. Perhaps a long walk or a run.



Spring is also an ideal time for a spring clean (obviously) and a clear out. This might not mean getting rid of half of your wardrobe, just remove those heavy, wintry clothes so you can focus on some lighter wares. Declutter and get rid of anything that doesn't 'spark joy', whether that be clothes, books, or simply some trinkets that you can give away to a new home.

It might also be time to shift from a heavy duvet to something lighter. With it, you can refresh the bedding to opt for more colourful shades.

With more sunlight to enjoy, spend some more time in it. Set out to leave the house earlier, maybe with a hot drink, and enjoy the morning. Alternatively, take some time during the evening for a sunset stroll.