



Supporting your child with sleep

Hampshire Mental Health
Support Teams

MENTAL HEALTH
SUPPORT TEAMS



INTRODUCTION

Session Overview:

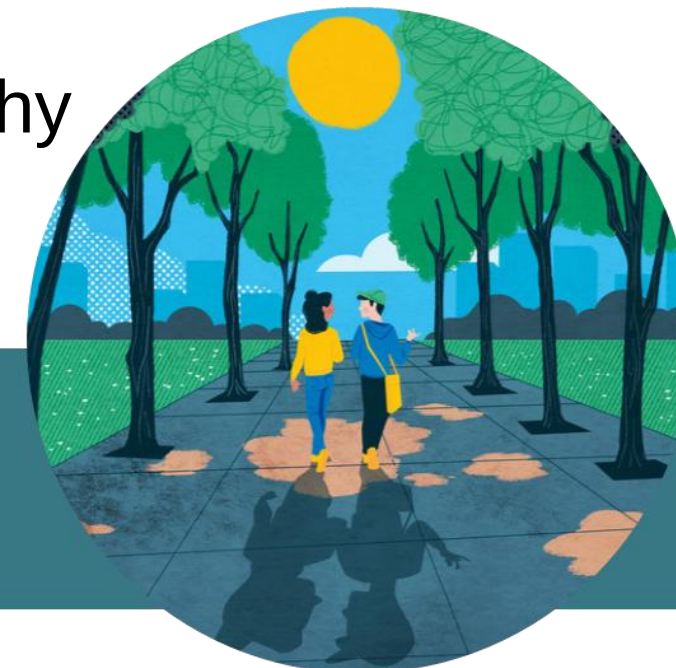
This workshop will explore importance of sleep in children and young people.

We will cover:

- What sleep is
- Why sleep is essential
- Common challenges with sleep
- What is sleep optimisation
- Practical ways to support healthy sleep habits and sleep optimisation at home

Session aims:

- To give parents and carers knowledge and practical strategies to support healthy sleep habits in children and young people



Workshop Feedback form (Before and after)

Parent Workshop- Sleep at
Foxhills At the start of the works
hop... (Copy)



Raise Your Hand If.....



MENTAL HEALTH
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What is sleep?

“Rest and recover” period for our brain, nerves, muscles...

Extended bout of rest

Occurs daily

We are unaware of what's going on around us

Sleep is an active period in which a lot of important processing, restoration and strengthening occurs

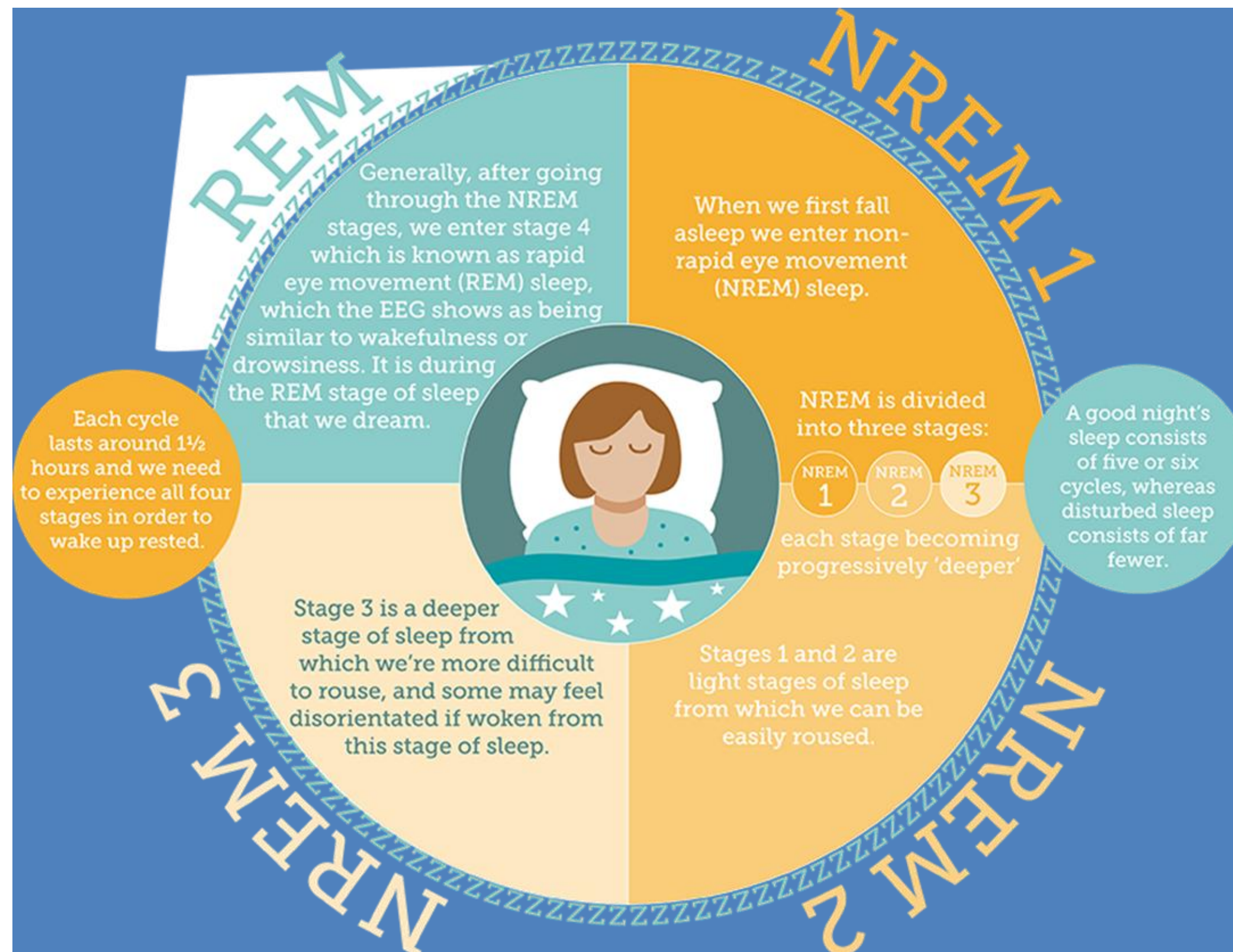


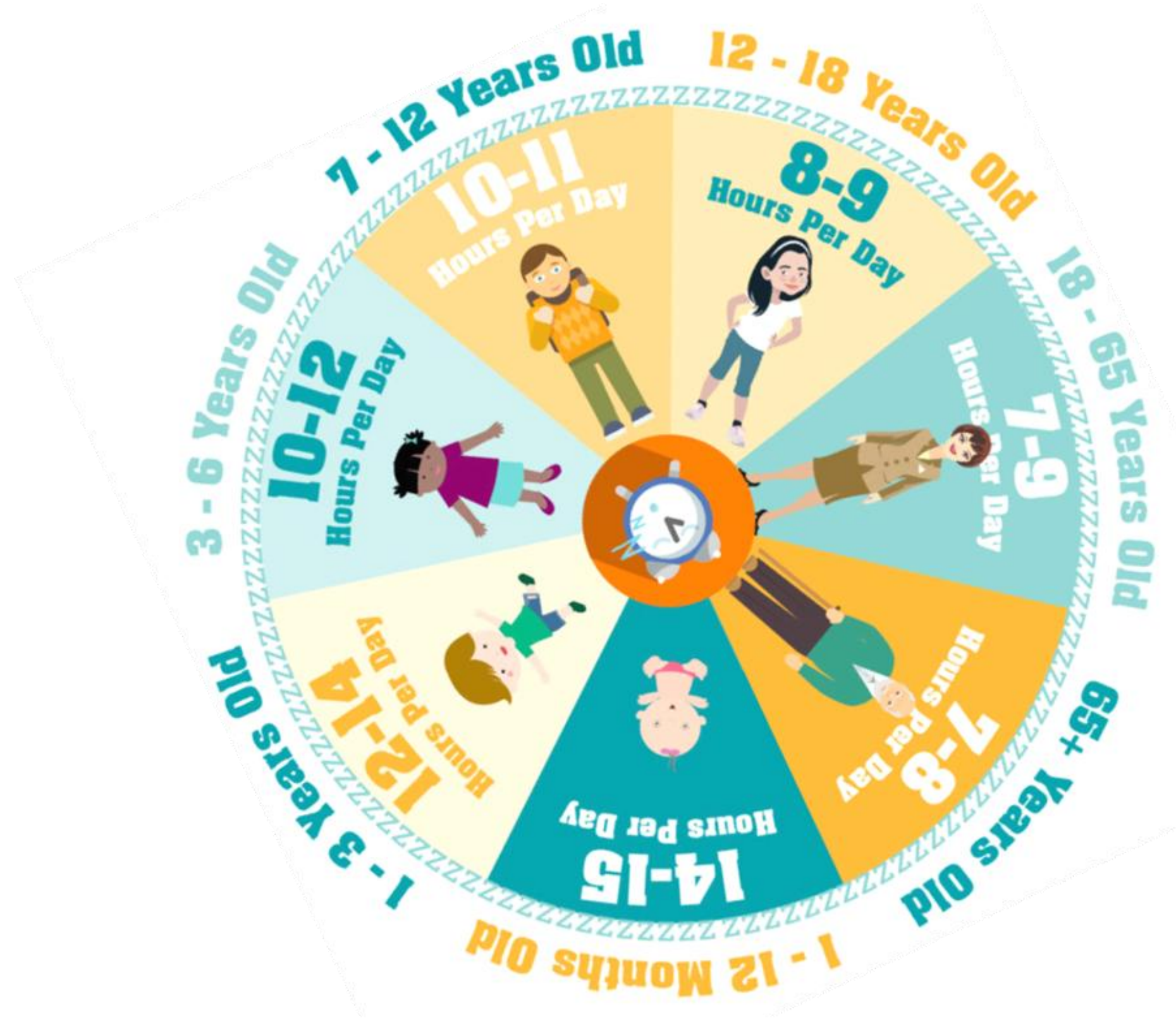
Key points to remember

Sleep is essential for growth, learning, mood and behaviour

Sleep challenges are common and not a parenting failure





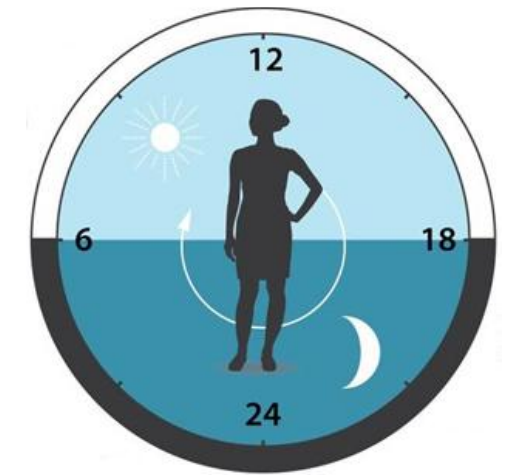


What is the Circadian Rhythm?

Circadian rhythm = internal body clock.

Melatonin is a hormone that occurs naturally in our bodies during our circadian rhythm. It is produced at nighttime to help us go to sleep. Light in the morning signals to our brains to stop producing this hormone, meaning we feel less sleepy.

During adolescence, the circadian rhythm naturally shifts to later at night, meaning that they find it hard to fall asleep earlier, and are sleepier in the morning.



How do you feel if you don't sleep well?



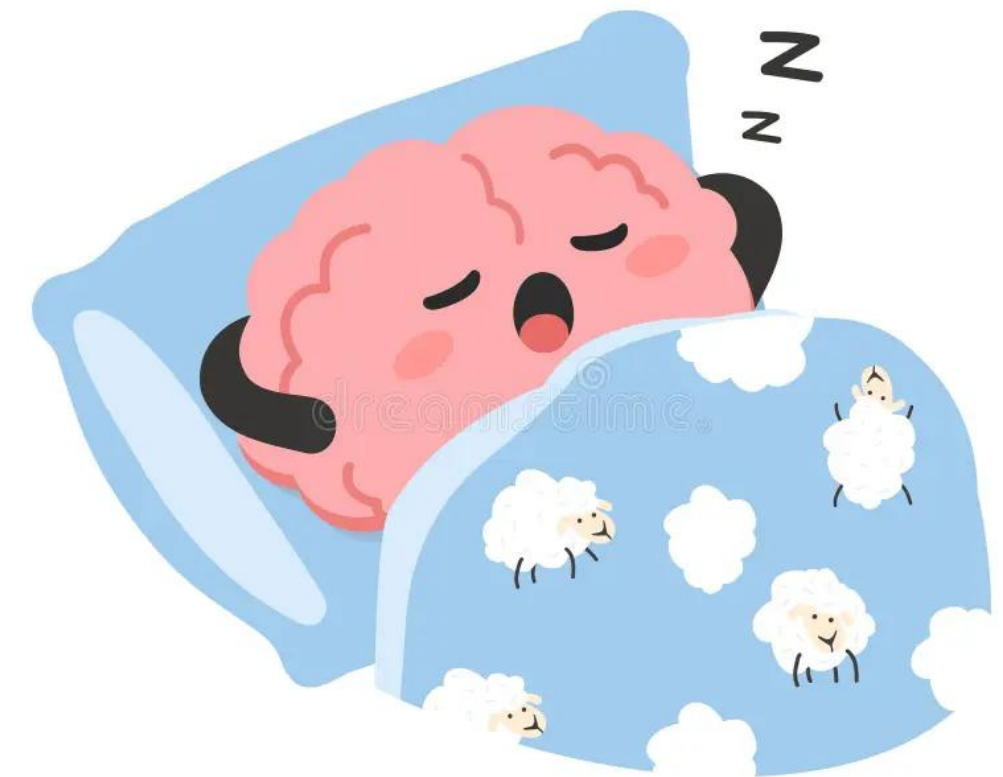
Why is Sleep Important?

Good sleep = physical + mental wellbeing

The occasional night without sleep will make you feel tired the next day, but it won't affect your health.

However, after several sleepless nights, you will start to find that you:

- feel tired all the time
- drop off during the day
- find it difficult to concentrate
- find it hard to make decisions
 - start to feel low in mood
- start to worry about not being able to sleep



What Sleep Does for Children

Brain development and learning

Emotional regulation and resilience

Physical growth and immune health

Behaviour, attention and school performance

What Happens When YOUR CHILD SLEEPS?



Why Can it Be Hard to Sleep?

- The bedroom may be too noisy, messy, too hot or too cold
- The bed may be uncomfortable or too small
- Not having a regular sleep routine
- Not getting enough physical activity/exercise during the day
- Eating too late in the evening - and finding it hard to get off to sleep
- Going to bed hungry - and wake up too early because of hunger
- Cigarettes, alcohol and drinks containing caffeine, such as tea, coffee and energy drinks (for parents)
- Illness, pain, or a high temperature



Common Sleep Challenges by Age

Younger children: bedtime resistance, night waking, fears

Primary age: anxiety, busy schedules, screens

Teens: late nights, phones, early school starts

Neurodivergent children may have different sleep needs



More Long-Term Problems

- Emotional problems
- Anxiety and worry
- Depression
- Thinking over and over about problems - usually without getting anywhere with them
- Physical problems – illness or disability
- Medications that affect sleep
- Illness, pain, or a high temperature.



What is Sleep Optimisation/ sleep hygiene?



The Sleep Council

The Bedroom

Lighting:

Make the room dark (use black out curtains).

Too much light can disrupt melatonin production needed for sleepiness.

Technology:

Turn off all screens + LED displays an hour before bed.

Technology gives off 'blue light' and can disrupt melatonin.

Noises from phones can be distracting and tempting to look at when trying to get to sleep.

Temperature:

If you're too hot or too cold, you won't sleep soundly. 16-18° C is ideal.

Medications that affect sleep

Cigarettes, alcohol and drinks containing caffeine, such as tea, coffee and energy drinks.

Illness, pain, or a high temperature.



Make the room relaxing

That means it should not be used for work, watching TV etc.

Save the bed for sleep!

A tidy room makes for a tidy mind... and a restful night's sleep!

De-clutter the bedroom and make separate “zones” for play, work and sleep.



The Bed

Make sure that the mattress is supporting properly.

Generally, a mattress should be replaced every 10 years to get the best support and comfort.



Maintain a **regular bedtime routine and sleep pattern**

- Try not to nap during the day.
- Include weekends in the routine.



The Power of Routine



Predictability helps children feel safe

Same steps, same order, same time (as much as possible)

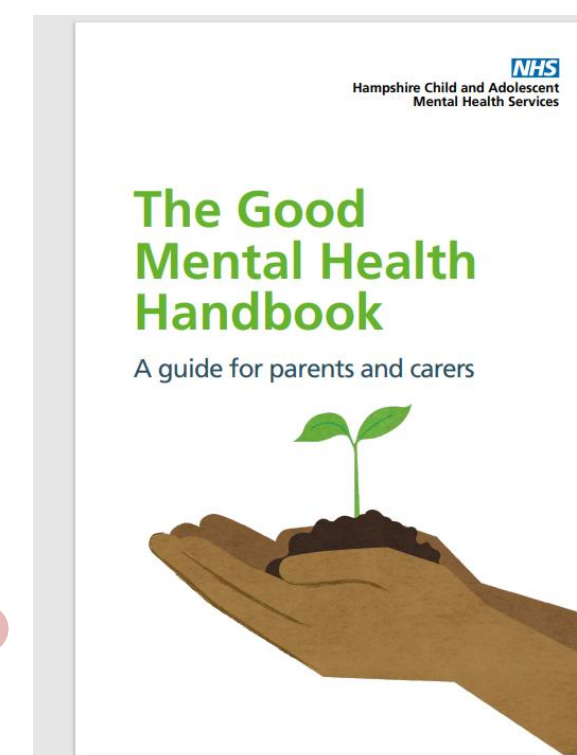
Visual routines can help younger or neurodivergent children

Helps train the brain

Modelling Techniques and Self-Care

Children learn through others
so modelling techniques is
helpful!

Self-care is important and
can be promoted through
good sleep optimisation!



Try to combine a food high in **protein** with a low to medium glycaemic index carbohydrate – **brown foods, such as brown rice, pasta and bread.**

Don't be tempted to buy melatonin supplements online – these are prescription.



Exercise

It is believed that exercising close to bedtime can disturb sleep.

Exercise before bed can feel like it might tire you out, but can actually make you more alert, meaning it is harder to get to sleep.

Gentle yoga exercises before bed may help to relax you but won't be too energetic.

Exercising earlier in the day can mean that you sleep better at night. Even moderate aerobic exercise helpful for getting to sleep (such as walking).



Screens and Sleep



Blue light delays melatonin – use blue light phone features where possible

Social media keeps brains “on alert”

Aim for screens off 60–90 minutes before bed

Collaborate, don’t confiscate (especially with teens)

Supporting Anxious Bedtimes

Validate feelings without “fixing” them

Calm, confident responses

Worry time earlier in the evening

Relaxation and soothing tools: breathing, stories, music



Soothing Skills for The Moment



Progressive Muscle Relaxation

This technique helps to notice the difference in sensation between being tensed and relaxed.

Try this before bed or when feeling stressed.

Practice this, slowly moving up the entire body.



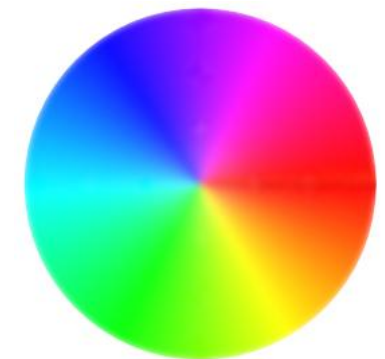
Breathing Exercises



Breathing slowly helps slow our heart rate, helping to reduce physiological stress responses. This prepares your body for sleep by making sure you are not overly stimulated. There are a few different exercises that can be tried:

Square breathing: (breathing in, holding breath, breathing out and holding whilst tracing your fingers along the edge of an imaginary square or following this with your eyes – helps control the pace of your breathing).

Colour breathing: (your favourite or relaxing colour – breathing this in and letting to fill you, and breathing out a negative colour, or breathing out all of your thoughts. Focusing on imagining breathing this colour in).



Balloon breathing: (imagine our stomach has a balloon inside – we want to breathe in and imagine we are filling this balloon, and it is inflating. Breathe so that our tummies get bigger, not our chests).

Worry Time and Problem Solving

Having dedicated time each day to focus and try to problem solve our thoughts and worries can help us clear our minds.

If you find yourself worrying when you go to bed, write down your worries, and an action plan to solve these for tomorrow, then think:

“I cannot do any more right now to solve my worries, I will leave them until the morning.”

Getting our thoughts onto paper can sometimes help us feel like we are in more control, as they aren't going round and round in our heads but are fixed on a page.



The 20 Minute Rule

If your child is awake about 20 minutes, don't force sleep

Calmly get out of bed

Do something quiet and boring

Return to bed when they feel sleepy



Strategies to Support Relaxation

Grounding

5

things you
can see



4

things you
can feel



3

things you
can hear



2

things you
can smell



1

thing you
can taste



Self-soothe box



"I am feeling..."

"My body feels..."

Name it, tame it

"This is making me feel..."



Write it down



Write down on a piece of
paper/journal/on your phone how you
are feeling. Some people find it helpful
to cross it out or rip it up after. Or
use a worry Monster.

Worry Monster

Write your worries down
and feed them to a
worry monster or you
could use a box (like a
shoe box)



Bubbles

Imagine your worries
and thoughts are
bubbles that pop and
disappear.



Any other ideas?

What has worked for you in the past?



When Children and Young People Wake Up at Night

Be Brief, boring, calm responses

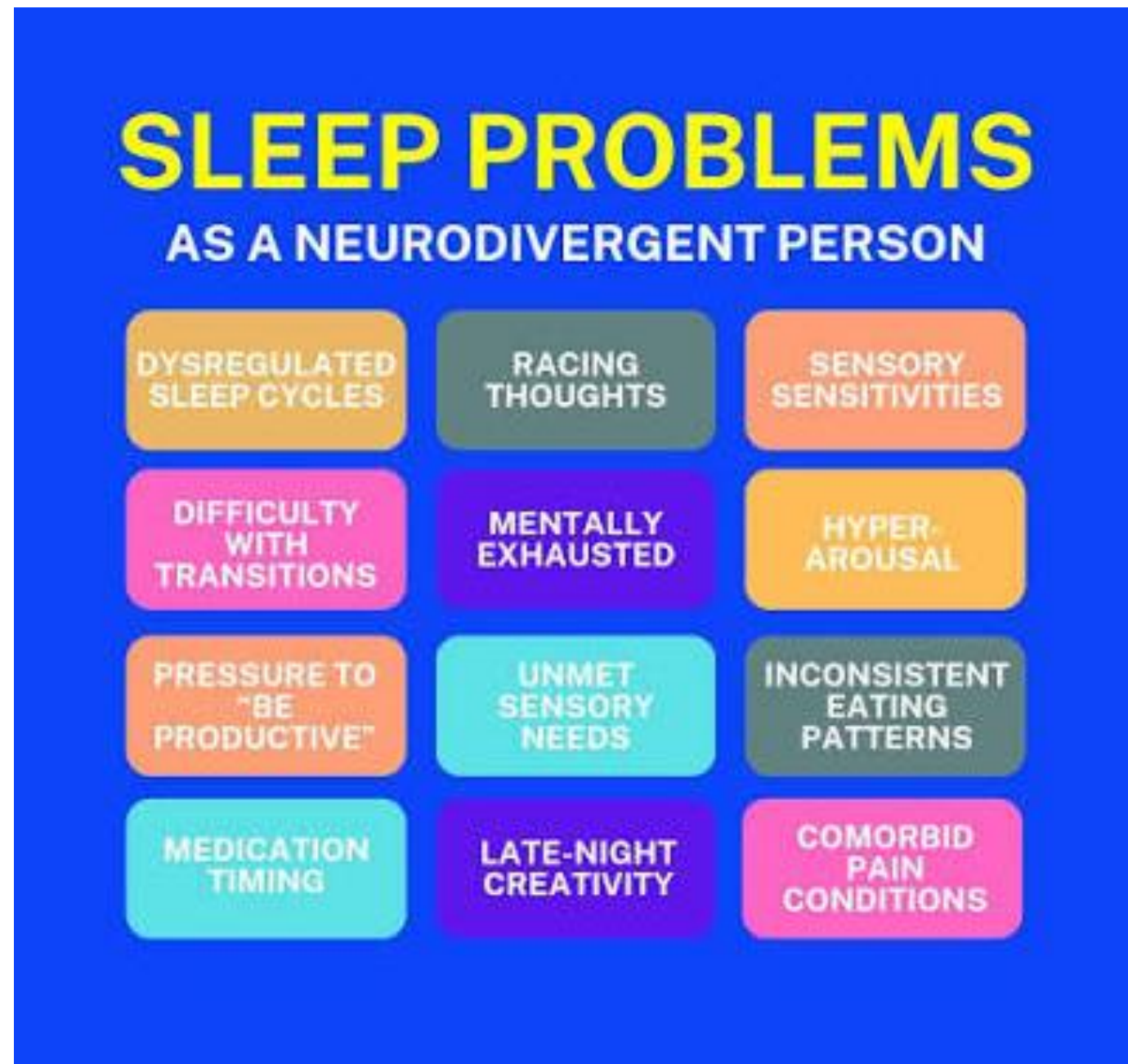
Avoid creating new sleep habits you don't want to keep

Forcing sleep often backfires. The goal: calm body + calm mind

Progress takes time—expect ups and down



What About Neurodivergent Children?



Sleep differences are common (ADHD, autism)

Sensory needs matter

Flexibility over "rules"

Progress over perfection

When to Seek Extra Support



Ongoing sleep issues despite routine changes

Snoring, breathing pauses, extreme tiredness

Anxiety or low mood linked to sleep

Speak to GP, health visitor, or school support



What's *one* thing you could try this week?

Small steps are powerful

Consistency beats intensity

Remember:

There is no “perfect sleeper”

You're not alone—sleep issues are common

Resources

Hampshire CAMHS Website:

<https://hampshirecamhs.nhs.uk/>

Family Lives:

<https://www.familylives.org.uk/>

Hampshire Parent Carer Network:

<https://www.hpcn.org.uk/>

PACE events:

<https://hampshirecamhs.nhs.uk/events/>

Hampshire Healthy Families:

<https://www.hampshirehealthyfamilies.org.uk/>

Chat Health – for expert advice from
healthcare professionals (Monday to Friday)

text 07520615720 (0-5 years old)

text 07507332417 (5-19 years old)

PDF available online



Resources

- **The Sleep Council** website: www.SleepCouncil.org.uk for practical information and advice.
- The **Hampshire CAMHS** website: www.HampshireCAMHS.nhs.uk has information about sleep.
- **The Sleep Charity**: <https://thesleepcharity.org.uk/information-support/children/diet-sleep/>
- **Sleep Charity Helpline** page: <https://thesleepcharity.org.uk/national-sleep-helpline/>
- if you'd like to talk about your sleep, you can call us between 7pm and 9pm, Sunday to Thursday on 03303 530 541.



Resources

- **Teen Sleep Hub:** <https://teensleephub.org.uk/>
- **SNappD:** The Sleep Nap Diary App.
- **Headspace:** Guided lessons on mindfulness, sleep, and simply remembering to breathe, free trial then paid subscription.
- **Sweet Dreams:** Our help and advice card for young people experiencing Sleeping Difficulties, providing information on how to support young people, what to look for and when you should be concerned:
<https://www.sussexcamhs.nhs.uk/resources/resources-for-families-carers-and-professionals/recipes-4-wellbeing>





Any Questions?

<https://hampshirecamhs.nhs.uk/>





THANK YOU

<https://hampshirecamhs.nhs.uk/>



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