

Relationship Advice: Our Connection With Sleep



By [Dr. Amy Osmond Cook](#)

More people do this than you may think. [Taylor Swift](#) does it. [Kendall Jenner](#) does it, too. Some people have caught [Katy Perry](#) and Demi Lovato doing it, and supermodel Heidi Klum credits it as one of her best beauty secrets. What are they doing? They nap. And they make sure to get a good night's sleep. With less than 40 percent of Americans getting a satisfactory amount of sleep each night according to [gallup.com](#), it is evident we have a love/hate relationship with sleep. What happens when we sleep? And why is it so important for our well-being? "While we doze, our brains and bodies aren't slacking off, they're at work, repairing us after the day's battles and refueling us for tomorrow's slog—in more ways than you likely realize," [prevention.com](#) writer Sarah Klein says. The brain and heart are recharging, the liver is detoxifying the day's activities, and skin cells are reproducing and repairing. With the role of sleep being such an important part of our wellness, it's time we build a healthy relationship with sleep. Here are four ways to do it.

Want to feel less tired during the day? Then follow this relationship advice about sleep.

1. Don't ignore sleep. The notion that sleepless people can accumulate a "sleep debt" is true. And the long-term effects of neglecting the need for better sleep can have a negative effect on daytime functions. "The curious thing is that with

sleep deprivation, you can only pay off a recent debt,” Brandon Peters, M.D. says. “Fortunately, the short-term effects of sleep deprivation are quickly reversed by getting adequate rest.” Although the damage from years of not sleeping may be difficult to remedy, we can start improving our sleep habits now with immediate benefits like improved motor skills, better concentration, and decision-making skills.

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2. Pampering is required. The best way to welcome a good night’s sleep is to adhere to a routine. Experts from The Mayo Clinic suggest going to bed and waking up at the same time each day. And try adding a soothing ritual like a hot bath, relaxing music, reading a good book, or dimming the lights for quiet meditation. It will help lull you into a deep sleep that will allow you to wake up energized for the next day.

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3. Let the process progress naturally. Although getting seven to nine hours of sleep per night is the popular belief, some of us simply don’t need that much sleep. The National Sleep Foundation conducted recent studies that place more emphasis on the way you feel rather than dictating a specific amount of time. “Pay careful attention to your mood, energy, and health after a poor night’s sleep versus a good one,” experts at Sleep Foundation say. “Ask yourself, ‘How often do I get a good night’s sleep?’ Like good diet and exercise, sleep is a critical component to overall health.” The National Sleep Foundation uses a series of questions to measure adequate sleep. For example, after sleeping seven hours, do you feel productive and happy? Are you overweight? Do you rely on caffeine to get you through the day? And do you feel sleepy while driving? The answers may help you better gauge how many hours your body needs to stay healthy.

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4. Give sleep your full attention. If you want to improve your sleep quickly, put down the electronic devices before you go to bed. “The pervasive glow of electronic devices may be an impediment to a good night’s sleep,” [Washington Post](#) writer Meeri Kim says. The culprit is the blue light emitted by computer and smartphone screens. The physiology behind it stems from the tiny pineal gland in the brain. It releases melatonin a couple of hours before you are ready for bed. However, the blue light of electronic devices prevents the pineal gland from releasing melatonin, which means you don’t feel sleepy. And, morning arrives before you’ve had a chance to get a good night’s sleep.

The health risks from a lack of sleep are enough to keep you awake at night. But by catching up on lost sleep, sticking to a routine, gauging how we feel each morning, and unplugging at night, we are on our way to a healthy lifestyle that can lead you to your future sweetheart. And, that’s just dreamy!

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