How to sleep well

Since Lockdown, many of you have been having trouble sleeping. Here's what some of you have told us:

I wake up in the middle of the night and can't get back to sleep.

It's hard to sleep because I worry about having nightmares.

There's lots going on in my head.

My sister's sleeping patterns have changed. Now she sleeps all day and stays up late at night talking to her friends.

You're really tired but you can't get to sleep and when you finally do, you're awake a few minutes later.

I feel like Lockdown is taking over my life.

Sleep can be affected by the following things:

- worries
- not feeling tired enough
- too much screen time, especially just before bed
- temperature – are you too hot or too cold?
- noise – do you share a room with someone who makes too much noise?

What can we do to help our sleep?

Having a routine, where you do the same relaxing things in the same order and at the same time each night, can really help:

- Have a warm bath (or shower) before bed to make you feel relaxed
- Make sure the light in your room is dim – so it feels like more of a sleepy glow
- Read quietly or ask your adult to read to you
- Listen to some relaxing music
- Try meditation exercises to help you relax (see next page)

Breathing exercise for bed
## (this also helps if you feel worried or stressed)

If you're lying down, place your arms a little bit away from your sides, with the palms up. Let your legs be straight, or bend your knees so your feet are flat on the floor.

If you're sitting, place your arms on the chair arms.

If you're sitting or standing, place both feet flat on the ground. Whatever position you're in, place your feet roughly hip-width apart.

- Let your breath flow as deep down into your belly as is comfortable, without forcing it.
- Try breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth.
- Breathe in gently and regularly. Some people find it helpful to count steadily from 1 to 5. You may not be able to reach 5 at first.
- Then, without pausing or holding your breath, let it flow out gently, counting from 1 to 5 again, if you find this helpful.
- Keep doing this for 3 to 5 minutes.

Because of the weather and Lockdown, we're not getting outside for fresh air and exercise as much as we should, but these things could really help us to sleep better.
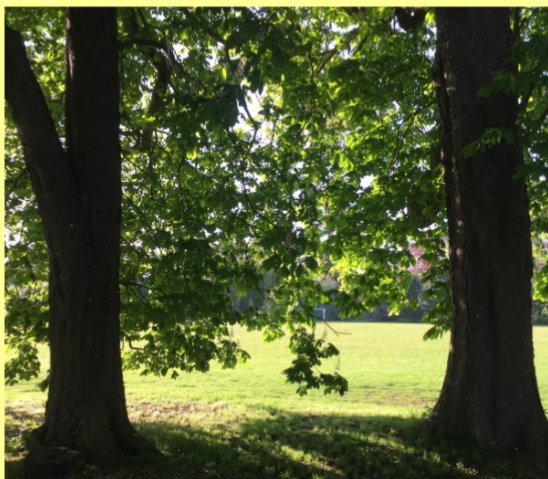
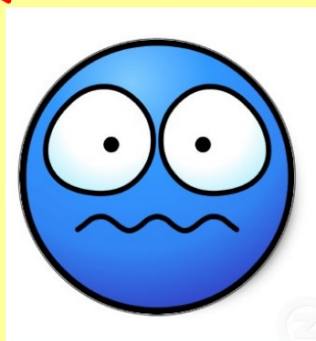Have a look at this lovely website to learn about the advantages of fresh air and nature.

https://nhsforest.org/coronavirus-lockdown-we-need-nature-now-more-ever

What can we do with our worries before bed?

Read a book to take our mind off them

Draw them and then throw them away

Write them down in a worry journal

Talk to your adult

Put them in a worry box or a worry monster

Anything else?

Worries

Tablets, smartphones, computers and anything that needs a screen can really affect our sleep. The light from the screens stimulates our brains, making them feel more awake and busy. We need to slow things down and feel calm and peaceful before bed, so we need to SWITCH OFF OUR SCREENS!

Try to do this at least an hour before bedtime.

Make sure your bedroom is quiet and dark, and ideally, tidy! When things are organised and put away, it can make us feel calmer and more relaxed.

If you prefer to sleep with some light in your room, try to have low lighting, nothing overhead and bright.

If you can't control the noise in your room (if you share a room with siblings), ask your adult to buy you some ear plugs, to help you block out any noise.