

PATH²

DESIGNING YOUR IDEAL SLEEP SITUATION

The way you sleep is a habit. Make it a good one. While sleep quantity is primarily determined by two uncontrollable factors, genetics and age, sleep quality is within your control. There are a variety of factors you can align to create a deeply restorative sleep experience. In this exercise, reflect on the sleep factors listed below and how to align them with your personal preferences to create your ideal sleep situation. Then put your design into practice to notice the differences. After sleeping on it for a while, go back and tweak your design to make it even better. Then consciously follow it for a few months to solidify your new and improved sleep habit.

TIME: When you wake up without an alarm you can identify how much sleep you need to be physically energized, and mentally alert throughout the day. Find your perfect bedtime by using that figure and count backwards from when you have to wake up.

PLACE: When you enter a room that is used only for sleep your mind will automatically slow down and instruct your body to prepare for rest. To encourage this process find alternative locations to do the things you do in your bedroom besides sleep.

SLEEP POSITION: When you sleep with proper posture, you will wake up free of pain and stiffness. The most stressful sleep position is on your belly, especially if your pillow is thick. The least stressful is on your side with a pillow between your knees and a thin one under your ear. When sleeping on your back you shouldn't be able to see your feet and you should put a pillow behind your knees. Find some thin and small pillows for your head and knees to retain your spine's natural S-curve while you sleep.

LIGHT & SOUND: When you deprive your eyes of light and your ears of sound, you deprive your mind of information to process. Find ways to create darkness and quiet in your bedroom. Black out your windows. Determine the last light you turn off before sleep then change the bulb to a lower wattage. Cover any lingering sounds with white noise from a fan or create a tranquil soundscape with a recording of rain or crashing surf.

FOOD & DRINK: When you consume caffeine and alcohol in the hours before bed, your sleep pattern gets disrupted. Have your last drink several hours before the time it takes to leave your system. Find ways to make yourself a snack of protein and carbs a few hours before bed, as this will wash your brain in tryptophan, the sleep chemical.

ACTIVITY: When you engage in an activity that *both* relaxes your body and calms your mind, you prepare yourself for deep, restful sleep. Find an activity that does both for you and make time for it shortly before you go to your bedroom.