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# Autism and Sleep

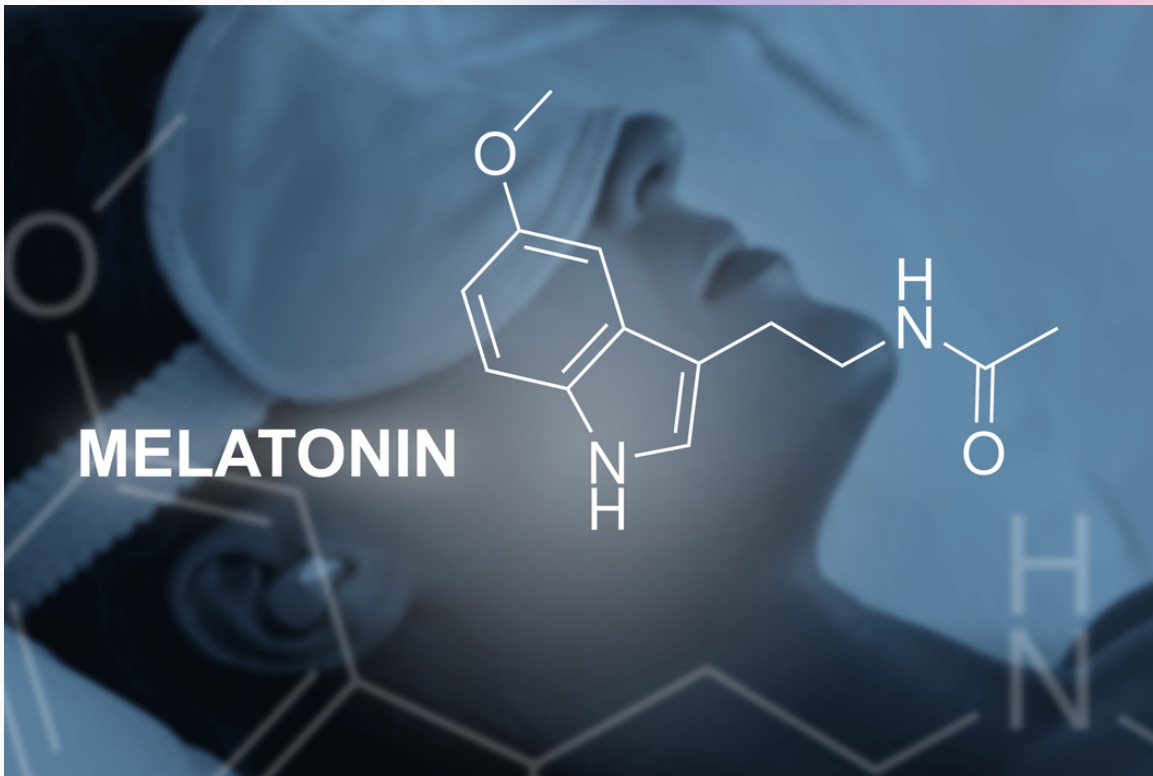


WRITING LED BY ANDY SMITH AND COPRODUCED  
WITH THE SPECTRUM GAMING COMMUNITY

# The magic formula for sleep



The magic formula for sleep is high levels of melatonin, low levels of stress and a bedtime routine. This guide will recommend ways to reduce stress at night through calming strategies and a routine, and suggest how to increase melatonin.



# What is melatonin?

Melatonin is a natural occurring hormone that the body produces which helps to control the sleep cycle. Its production increases as it starts to get dark, as this signals that it is time to sleep. This is why people often say turning screens off at night is helpful - the light can trick the brain into thinking it isn't time for sleep yet and stop melatonin from producing (but no screen time isn't always helpful - more on that later!).

The body also has a "circadian rhythm" (also known as the internal body clock) - where it feels ready to wake up or get ready for bed, which tends to roughly follow the 24 hour day cycle. Things that interfere with this cycle can make sleep more difficult.

One common theme in our community is that sleep difficulties are as a result of a high level of trauma - and the one thing that helps with sleep is recovery from this/ an increase in overall wellbeing

In addition to hearing directly from young people, there is research to suggest that autistic young people struggle with sleep, specifically with longer sleep onsets, frequent waking, irregular sleep-wake patterns, early waking and struggling with sleep routines. There is evidence for melatonin production differences in autistic young people too - they may not be releasing enough melatonin at the start of the night to feel sleepy.

# Sleep strategies

Some 'sleep strategies' focus on increasing melatonin, but for most autistic people, the biggest reason for struggling with sleep is having a high level of stress and anxiety. This means that the focus should be on stress reduction strategies at bedtime and having a calm routine in place, rather than just on increasing melatonin.

Some of the best stress reduction strategies autistic young people mention are ones that include use of technology. This means that rather than removing technology to increase melatonin, it is helpful to find a compromise that increases melatonin just enough, while also reducing stress enough to make sleep easier. Sleep only works if you have both high melatonin and low stress.

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Helpful sleep strategies seem to fit into one of three categories, and each individual person will have certain categories they need to focus on to make sleep easier. Therefore, we are hoping to share helpful strategies for all three:

- 1 Strategies that increase melatonin, and help the brain feel it is ready for bed
  - 2 Getting the body and room ready for sleep
  - 3 Calming strategies – this includes sensory strategies that are also really helpful, but also having chances to process everything that has happened during the day.
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# Sensory strategies

What are sensory strategies?

When we are stressed/ anxious/ overexcited, it isn't very easy to sleep as the body feels very awake! That's normal. Some sensory input can make you feel more awake (such as loud sounds or bright lights) and some can make you feel calmer. Calming strategies at bedtime relax the brain and can help the body to feel more ready for bed.

I always say:

“sensory strategies at bedtime are as annoying, but as important, as brushing your teeth. You don't want to do them as they can feel a bit silly or take a lot of time, but they are still really, really helpful for a good night's sleep”.

When I started to go on a walk every night before going to sleep (which is an example of a sensory strategy), my sleep increased by about 2 hours per night!

## **Distractions that prevent the increase of stress:**

One very common theme among autistic people is that we think A LOT. This means that lying in bed with nothing to focus on and trying to sleep can be INCREDIBLY difficult.

Having distractions to reduce the chance of overthinking to stop our stress from increasing during bedtime is really helpful.

Remember, not all of these strategies will work for everyone. One size does not fit all so it's important to create a personalised, individual approach.

For example, if you are someone who needs to reflect on the day before you sleep every night. If it has been a busy day, there is more to reflect on, so it may take longer to fall asleep than a quieter day. For some people the opposite is true. A busy day might make it easier to fall asleep as you will be more physically/ mentally tired, than one that is quieter, leaving you full of energy in the evening!

# Strategies that increase melatonin

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## 1 Reduce blue light in the evening

Blue light can trick the brain into thinking it's still daytime. Blue light comes from a lot of electronic devices, but for some people having no screen time can be really difficult.

There are ways to help reduce some of the blue light if it is challenging to avoid screen time at bedtime, these include:

- wear glasses that block blue light
- download an app such as [f.lux](#) to block blue light on the laptop or computer
- install an app that blocks blue light on the smartphone. iPhones and Android phones also have “night time mode” or “eye comfort shield” mode which reduce blue light
- dim the lights in the room as it gets later (blue light comes from some light bulbs too). Consider using a dimmer light switch, a table lamp or turning off the lights after a certain time.
- turn down the brightness of screens and monitors as it gets closer to bedtime

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## 2 Avoid taking naps of longer than 30 minutes during the day

(20 minutes is the ideal time as you stay in the light sleep stage!) and resist taking naps after 3pm as it can impact on night-time sleep. Resist taking naps at all if you want to improve sleep and reset an irregular body clock.

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## 3 Try to go to sleep and wake up at consistent times

The body's circadian rhythm is on a loop, aligning itself with sunrise and sunset. Being consistent with sleep and wake times can help with having better sleep by helping to strengthen the internal body clock. It is also helpful to try keep to this same set time on weekends for consistency. If you are contemplating changing your sleep schedule, start by moving the time by 15 minutes at a time, not only is it difficult to change it by more than that but it will really disturb sleep and you need to allow the body to regulate between each change before moving to the next.

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## 4 Take a melatonin supplement

Melatonin is a key sleep hormone that tells your brain when it's time to relax and head to bed. While your body produces this, you can also have melatonin medication that you can take before bedtime, and some autistic people say this really helps with sleep. You must speak with your GP for more information about this. However, it's important to understand if it is a melatonin issue before looking into a prescription, which can be done by addressing sleep hygiene and implementing a routine first.

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# Getting the body and room ready for sleep



Creating a bedtime routine is really helpful for getting both the body and mind ready for bed. It is important that young people have input into this routine so that they understand it, enjoy it and it's effective.

The routine should focus on doing things that make a young person feel calm, but also which gives opportunities to debrief about their day (though not every young person will like to do this, and some will prefer to have an independent routine).

# Bedtime routine considerations

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- 1 One of the reasons young people can stay up is that things are quieter at night time - there are less expectations, less people to talk to and they have freedom to think/ process/ do things based on their interests. Is there a way to give young people this opportunity as part of their night time routine?

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  - 2 Let them do what they need at that time. Some people prefer to sleep in their outfit for the next day to remove early morning demand, others avoid tasks like tooth brushing too close to bedtime as the taste lingers and some prefer a dark, silent environment free of distractions.

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  - 3 Having flexibility is important - if they have had a stressful day or are low on energy, it may be difficult to do a full sleep routine. Skipping getting changed, washing or other activities could make the bedtime routine easier, on days that are more of a struggle. Sometimes, having a set, strict bedtime can be unhelpful. If they are mid way through a task (or a quest in a game) it may be really difficult to stop and may need to complete it first. Agreeing to finish a task, rather than having a time limit before bedtime can help.
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“I just feel like there's no expectations later at night. I don't have to talk to anyone or anything so it's just easy to kind of just do whatever I want without worrying. It's kinda refreshing sometimes”

It is really important to note here that sleep routines can be very difficult to establish and maintain - especially when levels of stress changes on a daily basis. It is important to make sure a young person doesn't feel like a failure because they are struggling to have a routine.



# Preparation for sleep

## Make your bedroom an optimum place for sleep

Certain sensory aspects of the bedroom can be distracting, making it harder to relax and go to sleep, as well as stay asleep. The environment and surroundings can also play a role.

It may help to:

- block out light using dark curtains or black-out blinds
- turn off electronic devices that have lights when they are not being used
- reduce noise using thick carpet, shutting doors fully, turning off appliances
- reduce smells coming into the room by closing the door fully, or by using scented oils that are more relaxing
- remove distractions that may make it more difficult to sleep
- decorate in neutral colours, bright colours can be over stimulating
- some people may prefer a little light in the room at night-time. If a dark room is distressing or disorientating, try using a soft glowing night light that can be safely left on all night
- create a safe 'cave' to sleep in - sleeping can feel very vulnerable, so a tent, top bunk bed, fort of soft toys, even sleeping under the bed works for some

## Set the bedroom temperature

Body and bedroom temperature can also profoundly affect sleep quality. It can be very hard to get a good night's sleep when it's too warm or cold.

Your body heat peaks late afternoon and then starts to drop in the evening to prepare your body for sleep, kickstarting melatonin production.

Around 16-18°C seems to be a comfortable temperature for most people, although it depends on your preferences and habits.

Some young people find it easier to sleep with lots of layers on top of them. Can you use layers which do not keep in too much heat, or keep the room as cool as possible to stop them from becoming too hot?

## Try not consume coffee late in the day

When consumed late in the day, caffeine stimulates the nervous system and may stop the body from naturally relaxing at night. Caffeine is also hidden in lots of products that we might associate with bedtime, such as hot chocolate. Some people are more sensitive to caffeine than others so it's best avoided from mid afternoon.

*Did you know, the half-life of caffeine is around 5 hours, that means it take five hours for just half of the caffeine you have consumed to leave your body!*

## Try not to eat late in the evening

Eating late at night may negatively affect sleep, as the body will be digesting food, which can feel uncomfortable as you try to sleep. Advice recommends avoiding a huge meal for three hours before bed. If you do feel you need a snack, a light, healthy snack (in the hour before bedtime) such as whole grains or fruit/ vegetables can be helpful and will not affect sleep as much. There are certain foods that contain melatonin that are more 'sleep friendly' but more research needs to be done around the amounts and the impact on sleep. These include:

- bananas – an excellent source of magnesium and potassium. They also contain tryptophan an amino acid that helps us to sleep but don't forget fruit contains sugar too. Blend one banana with one cup of milk or soya milk to make an ideal bedtime drink.
- almonds - they contain magnesium which promotes both sleep and muscle relaxation. They also help to keep blood sugar levels stable overnight
- fish – it contains vitamin B6 which again encourages production of melatonin, the sleep-inducing hormone triggered by darkness.
- warm milk – contains tryptophan helping us to nod off more easily. Calcium is also effective in stress reduction.
- honey

## Take a relaxing bath or shower

A relaxing bath or shower (around 30 minutes before bed) can be helpful at night as part of the evening wind down routine. The heat helps to lower blood pressure and stress level and the decrease in body temperature after a bath makes us feel more sleepy. Consider adding some sleepy bath time scents like lavender, ylang ylang and chamomile. If you don't enjoy baths or showers, this may not be as helpful.

## Exercise regularly

Research shows that exercise during the day is a great way to improve sleep, as it gradually tires the body, and also reduces anxiety at bedtime by releasing pent-up tension. Exercising is also followed by a drop in your body's temperature, which aids better sleep.

While exercise is great in helping us sleep well, try to avoid it at least two hours before bedtime as it can make sleep more difficult though. It may leave you feeling more alert/ awake, when you need to be in a state of calmness to be able to get a good night's sleep.

## Don't drink too much liquid before bed

Drinking large amounts of liquids before bed can be unhelpful, as you then may need to go for a wee at night time, interfering with sleep.

It's important to stay hydrated but try to not drink any fluids 1–2 hours before going to bed. It may also be helpful to use the bathroom right before going to bed, as this may decrease your chances of waking in the night.

## Reduce household noise

Most non autistic people can easily block out ambient noise, especially when they are tired, but for autistic people this can be difficult, as we can take in much more sensory information.

Household noises like the TV, music, the dishwasher, etc. can be over-stimulating or otherwise disturbing, making it impossible to fall asleep or even feel tired. As much as possible, try to limit household noises at bedtime. It can be effective to experiment with white/ brown/pink/green noise or delta/theta waves (using a white noise machine, app or video) to block out noises and find out which works for them.

It may be beneficial to use ear plugs or listen to music. Background noise is also really helpful for people who struggle with silence. One thing to consider when using noise for sleep is that it needs to stay consistent throughout the night eg. if white noise is being used, keep it on all night.

“Most of the time it's my anxiety when i hear loud noises outside or people walking around my house like my mum or dad and i think there are not them when i am laying in bed i think they are crooks and not my parents so i get anxious but it is always my parents moving”

“I get very anxious when I sleep, I look around the room thinking of something bad happening, friends not liking me or getting bored, or sometimes sounds coming from outside. It can never be too quiet, otherwise I get this buzzing noise in my ears, which makes me anxious too!”

## Assess the comfort of your pyjamas and bedding

Certain fabrics and clothing features can be extremely irritating for some people. Make sure that nightwear and bed are made of fabrics that cause the least discomfort and at best are soothing. Be aware that seams, zippers, and buttons can also be irritating, plus the size of the pillow.

It's recommended that the bed is swapped around every 5–8 years or consider things like a mattress topper instead of a full replacement mattress - Sometimes young people can find themselves sleeping on a mattress they've had (and outgrown) since they were at primary school. The comfier we are in bed, the easier it is to sleep.

# Calming strategies

## Relax and clear the mind in the evening

Relaxation techniques before bed have been shown to improve sleep quality, but it's all about finding the strategies that work for you.

These include reading a book, meditating, deep breathing, listening to calming (or your favourite) music, podcasts, watching a favourite show or playing a relaxing game. Try out different methods and find what works best for you.

Don't focus on trying to fall asleep; instead, focus on just trying to relax.

## Use relaxing scents

A scent that you find calming can help ease you into sleep e.g., lavender, chamomile, ylang ylang and tonka. These can be used in room diffusers, by adding a few drops to a pillow at night or in the bath/shower. Chamomile is also available as a sleep tea, combined with honey it can be very relaxing.

## Do some reflection before bed each day

[“Sometimes your worries and precautions for the future pop up. Or circle round your head”](#)

When we have had a stressful day, it can be really difficult to process everything that happened, so writing it down or talking through it with someone can be helpful. Sharing worries makes them feel a bit lighter than keeping them to yourself.

- Write down or think about three things that went well and three that didn't. Then, spend some time thinking about what can be done to keep the good things happening, and what can be done to reduce the chance of the bad things happening again. Make sure these are written down, so it is easier to think about them less, knowing you have actions you can come back to at a later stage, or put it in a drawer or away somewhere.
- It may be helpful to keep a notepad and pen (or use the notes section on a phone) at bedtime to write down worrying thoughts, meaning you feel the need to think about them a little less.

**“Try and figure out why it makes you nervous, and if you can control it do something about it”**

**“I feel very tired, but when I attempt to sleep, I struggle to relax as my thoughts spin around in my head and eventually rest with me thinking of the bad thoughts. I have bad dreams often and I don't know why. I also worry about what is going to happen tomorrow and about what has already happened. school was also a massive downside to my life which is why i do homeschool now, but i also think about doing my homeschool session in the morning and what is going to happen in it. I get anxious easily and I think that's a big part of it too. When I have a happy thought, sometimes my mind concentrates too much on the happy thought and it stops me from sleeping.”**

# Mindful activities

Mindfulness is NOT just meditation/ yoga. Mindfulness is about doing something that allows us to be 'present' in the moment.

This makes it easier for thoughts to come and go. Something where there is a state of flow.

When we have this and are thoroughly enjoying this/ engaged, it can make it a safer space for thoughts to process.

Focusing on mindful activities that are also calming before bed (e.g. running around the house playing with a dog could make you more awake, making it more difficult to sleep), can really help with getting a good night's sleep.

Try a weighted blanket or lycra sheet. Weighted blankets/ lycra sheets in bed can give a deep pressure, calming effect, making it easier to get to sleep. Make sure if you are looking into a weighted blanket, that it is the right weight for you.





# Preventing the increase of stress

## 1 Don't stay in bed if you are struggling to sleep

It's important to associate the bed with positive feelings. That's why it is recommended that if we've spent around 20 minutes in bed without being able to fall asleep, we should get out of bed and go do something relaxing, in low light. It's best to avoid checking the clock during this time so that we don't start to feel anxious about not being asleep.

If you are struggling, consider moving to a different space. Having flexible alternatives like moving to a different room or space elsewhere in the same room, means you are able to focus on something else entirely. Feeling too hot or too cold? Move to a beanbag or under the bed to regulate. If another room is not available, rest on the sofa in the lounge but make sure you don't fall asleep there.

“If you can't get to sleep then laying there usually doesn't help, at least for me. so try to think of what you find relaxing, whether that's listening to music, playing a game, speaking to friends, etc. that usually helps a lot!”

## 2 Manage worries

Many of us often lie awake worrying so set aside time before bed to write in a diary, a journal or write a to-do list for the next day. This can be a good way to take those thoughts out of the head and put the mind at rest. This can be with a physical pen and paper, an app to journal or a note in a phone.

“Distraction and a diary, I do a digital diary every day”



### 3 Do what the body is telling you to do

Before bed, we may feel the need to do activities which we are told are typically unhelpful for sleep. For example, playing a competitive game or talking with friends. However sometimes this is simply the brain telling us it needs the distraction because of a high level of stress. Rather than trying to stop doing this, which can lead to an increase in stress due to worrying thoughts, try and make slight adaptations instead. This means we can still do these things, but it might make it a \*little\* easier to get to sleep?

For example:

-If gaming, activate a blue light filter as mentioned earlier

-Watching videos requires less brain activity than gaming, so rather than gaming with friends, why not watch a YouTube video with friends? Consider saving videos that look good during the day, then watch them before bed? It offers a level of distraction as they are enjoyable videos, but make it a bit easier to sleep than gaming.

Keeping track of time though is really helpful - as time can fly when having fun! With an activity like this, set a realistic target time to try and sleep at (this can be a set time, a video length to watch, or an achievable goal within a game).

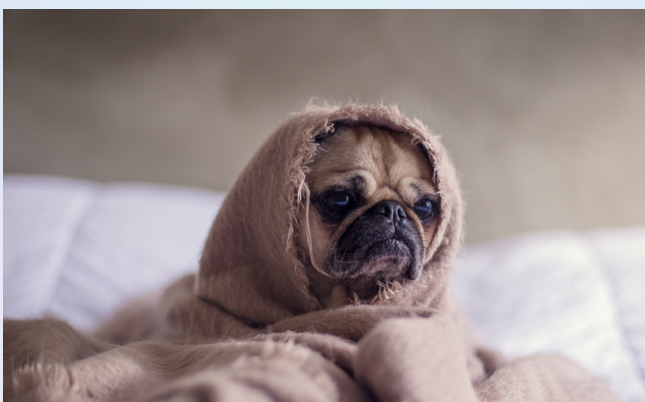
Having a set piece of music played at night to help warn that screen time is coming to an end may reduce the anxiety felt at just being told to stop.

### 4 Knowing what is coming the next day

Uncertainty often causes anxiety in autistic people, so having as much information as possible about the next day can be really helpful, to reduce overthinking.

### 5 Struggling with sleep and worried about the impact, let people know

“If you struggled with sleep, you may be more stressed and may get overwhelmed easier. It can be helpful to let people know in advance so they don’t think you are being moody or rude”



# Useful apps/ software/ product recommendations from young people

- [F.lux](#) - blue light software for PC
- [Spotify](#) - Spotify has a sleep timer, so you can listen to music or podcasts for a set amount of time, before they stop playing.
- [Audible](#) - You can listen to audiobooks and set a “bookmark” for when the book stops for the night.
- [Headspace](#) is a science-backed app in mindfulness and meditation, providing unique tools and resources to help reduce stress, build resilience, and aid better sleep. You can try Headspace for yourself and learn the essentials of meditation and mindfulness with their free basics course. If you enjoy it, you can subscribe. Headspace is available on iOS and Android.
- [Pzizz](#) is an NHS recommended app that helps you quickly calm your mind, fall asleep fast, stay asleep, and wake up refreshed. It uses "dreamscapes" – a mix of music, voiceovers and sound effects designed using the latest clinical research – to help you sleep better at night or take power naps during the day. Pzizz is available on iOS and Android.
- [Free Calm Sleep: Improve your Sleep for Free](#), is a free app available for Androids. It uses relaxing sleep sounds and ambiances that can be used to help improve your sleep. This app is available on Android.
- [Calm](#) is an app for meditation and sleep. It uses sleep stories, breathing programs, masterclasses, and relaxing music. Calm is a mindfulness app for beginners, but also includes hundreds of programs for intermediate and advanced users. Guided meditation sessions are available in lengths of 3-25 minutes so you can choose the length to fit with your schedule. Calm is available on iOS and Android.
- [Sleep Sounds](#) - Sleep melodies & Calming sounds, free sleep app. It uses sleeping sounds, nature sounds, rain sounds, meditation sounds and white noise and much more. This app is available on Android.



# What helps with getting to sleep? Additional thoughts from young people

- Watching calming videos online
- Sometimes it helps if I have to be up for something in the morning so I know when I have to sleep
- Having motivation to sleep/ something to look forward to the next day
- Listening to music with an mp3 player rather than a device with screens/ internet access
- Having someone in the room
- Having a busy day, or nothing on the next day
- Reading a book and listening to music
- A bedtime story and relaxing music
- Watching the same few yt vids over and over, my teddies
- brown noise/galaxy light (constant movement so I don't get massively startled if something moves)
- Having my fan on like white noise sometimes helps :)
- having a small amount of light in my room from a lamp or clock screen and sometimes listening to music with headphones can help but i will take my headphones off when i am ready to sleep
- Quiet sounds like rainforest sounds
- I like to distract myself with YouTube asmr, or music.
- Using a sleep mask
- Watching something mesmerising
- Sleeping in my mums bed
- Hot water bottle and my squish-mellows and back rubs! It sounds weird but it does help
- Certain noises playing in the background, I have this white block that you can put different sounds on it like rain, the sea, fire crackling, wind, the fan and I think a couple more!
- Listening to podcasts, speeches, talks about life, religion etc
- Try to make yourself tired, go for a run or something that tires you out
- find what works best for them, because I need loud noises to help me sleep, and some people say turn everything off but that doesn't help me

# Suggestions from Spectrum Gaming members

- ASMR apps/ sounds
- YouTube channel called grand illusions
- Ear defenders/ ear plugs
- Any book or music you enjoy
- I like chill panda it is fun because it includes a calm fun game with pandas and it has deep breath and more
- Audible and Naturespace
- Finch app, Beach waves sounds and facial masks to relax
- I use Netflix , Disney+ and sometimes YouTube. I want to try audio books as well maybe.
- I use YouTube for 10 hour videos of sleep music, Headspace is a good app for background noises, so is Calm.
- Weighted blanket
- Lois Armstrong and Lionel Richie have some relaxing songs
- I use my Alexa to play rain sounds or music to help me sleep.
- lofi playlist on Spotify and it helps me relax a bit, so if people use Spotify then I'd maybe recommend listening to some calming playlists on there. Around half a year ago, I used a meditation app and it helped me. sometimes it didn't work, sometimes it did, but it definitely helped whatsoever.
- Using an mp3 player rather than a phone to listen to music as it has less bright lights
- <http://asoftmurmur.com>
- Rewatching videos/ films so you have a sense of predictability
- OSTs of your favourite game - I like the Cult of the Lamb OST
- I have a projector that has a space effect on the ceiling which is really relaxing!
- No Copyright Sounds music
- SoundCloud, Google podcasts, YouTube
- Deep pillow spray
- We've successfully used sleep sounds on alexa

# Do you find it easier to sleep on some days compared to others? If so, why?

- I do, because some days may have been calmer than others
- Weekends are easier to sleep. Due to school not being open.
- I find it easier on weekdays because of school, I know I have to be up pretty early
- Sometimes when I am hyper I find it harder to go to sleep, probably because I have lots of energy and don't feel tired
- Because some days are easier than others, if I have a stressful day the next day, I won't sleep as well
- Only really when I've had a tiring day or if I've just been climbing
- It's easier to sleep on days where I don't need to be up in the morning because then I'm less "I really need to sleep I really need to sleep" and panicky
- Yes, I think it depends what's happening on the next day if I'm excited about something I'll be too hyper to sleep, if I'm relaxed and having a casual day it will just be the same
- I find it easier on a Friday because weekend pogs but hard on Sunday because school bad
- It's easier to sleep when I don't have school the next day because school makes me nervous
- Sometimes I'm cold. I find it easier to sleep then.
- I sleep poorly when it's warm or cold or when it's raining heavily
- Fridays are a lot easier to sleep because I don't have to stress about the next day since it's a lot less calm and I can spend the day doing things I like and not be stressed like I am on weekdays, I struggle a lot on Sundays because I have school to do during the week and Sundays are very quiet and chill so it gives me time to overthink
- depends on whether or not I've had a good day: on a bad day I may have troubling thoughts.
- I find sleep much more difficult on Sundays because for years I would automatically get anxious about school next day (even though I haven't been to school for a while it's still harder to sleep), and on days where I know I have to go somewhere the next day

# What helps if you are feeling anxious at bedtime?

- Talking to someone is very helpful for getting stuff off of your chest, and it's nice to talk to an adult about something stressing you out.
- It depends on what, if it's about general things, then watch a couple videos you enjoy for a bit, (normally i do it for 30 mins) and relax, if its about not sleeping, then same steps, but know that no matter what happens with it, it's never as bad as you think, (normally it doesn't affect my day massively, but i feel really tired come 6ish)
- My mum stays with me till I go to sleep and if it doesn't work I sleep downstairs or go downstairs till I'm calm again.
- Reading a book helps me not have nightmares - I have never had a SINGLE nightmare since I started reading before I went to sleep.
- Well for starters I know lots of people worry about school or work so the best thing to do is to ask. ask your brother, sister, mom, dad even your grandparents how they felt when they were in your situation. also if you feel anxious about something do something to take your mind of it for example : reading, talking on sg etc
- Breaking down big worries/ tasks into small, achievable steps
- Talking to a trusted person/ friend
- I like to use breathing techniques, to breathe in and breathe out slowly, saying mantras can help, tapping your thumb can help as well if you're having a panic attack, tapping your thumb gently or firmly will help relieve stress and send a calming signal into your brain
- Try and think through what is making you anxious, and think of all of the good and bad outcomes that can happen. Although you will still be worried, at least now you can prepare yourself for it because you know some of the possibilities that could occur. When you do this, you can work out what can be done to reduce the chance of the bad things happening