

THE IMPORTANCE OF SLEEP

LESSON 3 TEACHING PLAN

IMPROVING MY SLEEP



PARTNER Ireland

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

The **importance of sleep** teaching module was developed in response to the findings of the 2020 and 2022 Planet Youth surveys. These surveys have highlighted a very significant issue related to lack of sleep for our teens, and the dramatic impact this is having on their wellbeing. The module's second lesson, **My relationship with sleep**, introduced the science of sleep to pupils, highlighted some common sleep problems, and asked pupils to examine their own attitudes and behaviours around sleep.

This **Improving my sleep** lesson will allow pupils to better understand their sleep routine and sleep hygiene, help identify areas they can improve, and introduce some simple relaxation techniques.

ALIGNMENT TO THE SPHE SPECIFICATION FOR JUNIOR CYCLE 2023

STRAND 1: UNDERSTANDING MYSELF AND OTHERS

- 1.1 Explore the physical, social and emotional changes that happen during adolescence

STRAND 2: MAKING HEALTHY CHOICES

- 2.1 Consider the multifaceted nature of health and wellbeing, and evaluate what being healthy might look like for different adolescents, including how food, physical activity, sleep/rest and hygiene contribute to health and wellbeing

STRAND 4: EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

- 4.1 Discuss the fluid nature of emotional wellbeing and ways to nurture and protect it.
- 4.5 Explore how emotional wellbeing can be affected by factors within our control, such as sleep, diet, exercise, substance use and online exposure, and factors beyond our control

LESSON 3 LEARNING GOALS

RESOURCES NEEDED FOR THIS LESSON

At the end of the lesson, pupils will:

- Better **understand** their sleep routine and sleep hygiene
 - Be able to **identify** how their sleep can be improved
 - Be **aware** of new relaxation techniques
- Lesson 3 PowerPoint (Available in ppt and pdf version. The ppt version has slide notes).
 - Lesson 3 Diamond 9 worksheet
 - Sleep Plan Handout
 - Lesson 3 3-2-1 Worksheet

SLIDE NUMBERS, CONTENT AND NOTES

SLIDE	CONTENT AND NOTES
1	Improving my sleep. Title slide.
2	Lesson introduction. Learning goals and wellbeing indicators identified
3	How much sleep are teens getting? This slide is just a quick reminder for the pupils of how many of our teens are sleeping poorly. All results and statistics are from the November 2022 Planet Youth survey of 4,339 15 and 16 year-old teenagers in the 81 post-primary schools and 10 Youthreach centres in Galway, Mayo and Roscommon. Full reports from the survey are available for download from the www.planetyouth.ie website.
4	Sleep diary worksheet review This is the Sleep Diary worksheet. It was assigned as homework at the end of lesson 2 and, together with the Sleep Questionnaire worksheet, it should give pupils some insights into their sleep routines, behaviours, and deficits. There can be a general teacher-led discussion on the worksheet. “We know from the bar chart that over half of teenagers aren’t getting enough sleep, and this sleep diary exercise should have been useful to help you see how you’re getting on for your sleep.” “Did anyone see anything interesting when filling in the worksheet? “ “Was there anything that surprised you? “ “The rest of this lesson is going to be about ways we can improve our sleep and we’re going to start with a short video.”

<p>5</p>	<p>Introductory video</p> <p>Introductory video for Lesson 3 of the The Importance of Sleep teaching module.</p> <p>This short 1'33" video is intended to get the discussion going in the classroom about things we could be doing to improve our sleep. Click on the image to link to the video, which is hosted on the Planet Youth SPHE website called The Facts.</p> <p>This video was developed with the support of the students and staff in Castlerea Community School and all the information and statistics in the video are from the November 2022 Planet Youth Survey of 4,339 15 and 16 year-old pupils in the 91 post-primary schools and centres in Galway, Mayo and Roscommon.</p>
<p>6</p>	<p>Teacher-led classroom discussion.</p> <p>“So, what do we think of the video, can we do things to improve our sleep?”</p> <p>“Are there more ways than the ones mentioned in the video?”</p> <p>Let’s do a quick exercise and try and come up with some ideas about things we can do to improve our sleep?”</p>
<p>7</p>	<p>Diamond 9 group exercise: List some ways that you think sleep can be improved</p> <p>Can be completed individually or in groups and the exercise can then be discussed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Come up with some ideas about ways that sleep can be improved • Try to come up with nine • Put your most important at the top and your least important at the bottom <p>The pupils are unlikely to come up with an exhaustive list and the next few slides go into a bit more detail on ways that sleep can be improved.</p>
<p>8</p>	<p>Sleep Hygiene</p> <p>What is sleep hygiene?</p> <p>The term sleep hygiene really refers to having good habits and behaviours related to your sleep routine.</p> <p>Having good sleep hygiene should lead to you having an easier time falling asleep and having longer and better-quality sleep throughout the night.</p>

Healthy Sleep Hygiene Guidelines

All the information below, and that in the slide, is contained in the Sleep Plan Handout that can be printed out for the pupils to take home.

You can do a lot of things to improve your sleep.

1. **Prioritise your sleep and dedicate enough time for it.**

Make time for sleep. Pick a bedtime that allows you to get the recommended amount of sleep for your age. Teens should be getting at least 8 hours of sleep.

2. **Go to bed and wake up at the same times each day.**

Being consistent can make a big difference to how much and how well you sleep. Set and keep to a sleep schedule. Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day. This does mean including weekends, if at all possible. At least avoid the temptation for giant lie-ins. Staying up very late at weekends and having big lie-ins will throw out your routine and make the next school week harder. If you really struggle with this, consider finding an activity that you have to get up early for at the weekend.

3. **Create a dark, cool, comfortable, and quiet bedroom environment.**

Try to make your bedroom like a dark cave. Eliminate all the light you possibly can, including the LEDs on chargers and decorative lights or fairy lights. Make sure you have a mattress and pillow that suit you, and change your bedding regularly. Make your bed a cosy, appealing place. Try to organise blackout curtains or shades.

4. **Avoid bright lights or screens, especially around bedtime.**

It's a good idea not to use bright overhead lights at nighttime. If possible, use side lights, table lamps or reading lamps that have softer or warmer bulbs. Try to dim even these lights an hour before bed and avoid screen use if you can. At the very least, sure you have a blue light filter on your phone and turns the screen brightness down. More so than any other light, blue light messes with your body's ability to prepare for sleep because it suppresses the production of melatonin, the hormone that promotes feelings of sleepiness.

5. **Ideally, keep screens out of the bedroom altogether, but particularly after lights out.**

There are plenty of reasons to keep screens and phones out of your bedroom. It makes it easier to avoid their use when you should be transitioning to sleep. It also prevents checking your phone should you wake during the night. If you wake and use your phone, it will be far more difficult to fall back asleep. Also, phones are designed to get your attention. If you forget to put your phone in do-not-disturb mode, then messages, notifications, or updates are going to wake you. Phones are addictive of course, so if the idea of leaving it out of the bedroom causes

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you any anxiety, then all the more reason to do so. Make sure that you're in control of your phone and that it's not in control of you.

6. Have a regular bedtime routine that includes relaxing activities.

This is really important. More on this in later slides and in the handout.

7. Don't have tea, coffee, or energy drinks late in the day, and avoid heavy meals close to bedtime.

What you consume in the evening can affect your sleep. Cut back on caffeine from coffee, tea, or energy drinks, especially late in the day. Avoiding large meals before bed may also help to improve your sleep.

8. Try to get some exercise every day.

Exercising each day provides a lot of benefits and will improve your sleep. Try for at least 30 minutes of physical activity each day. Avoid heavy exercising close to bedtime though, as this will make it hard for your body and brain to wind down.

9. Expose yourself to natural sunlight early in the day, ideally before 10am.

Getting natural light early in the day helps make sure your internal clock is keeping good time and will help you to sleep better at night.

10. Don't have any naps after 3pm.

A well-timed nap can help you feel more alert during the day and make up for lost sleep, but napping too late in the afternoon will make it difficult to fall asleep when bedtime rolls around. Experts recommend keeping naps to around 20 minutes and avoiding naps after around 3pm.

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Other things to think about

Managing your stress. Stress is a normal reaction to difficult experiences but high levels of stress, or stress left unaddressed it can significantly interfere with your sleep. Finding ways to manage your stress will make it easier for you to sleep at night.

Managing your time. Good time management skills can be learnt and will be an asset in in all areas of your life. Effective use of your time will free up the opportunity to get loads more sleep.

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Good Routines

Routines really do matter.

Research shows that people who follow bedtime routines are more likely to go to sleep earlier, take less time falling asleep, sleep longer, and wake up less during the night. A consistent routine also helps train your brain that it's time to get ready for bed.

11...	<p>Routines are different for everyone, so decide on your own, just remember that good sleep routines start well before lights-out. In fact, we can have wind-down routines, bedtime routines, and morning routines that will each help us get more sleep.</p>
12	<p>An example wind-down routine. Starts 60 minutes before bedtime.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn off the overhead lights in the house or in your room, turn on lamps instead. • Have a last check-in on your phone and put it on charge in the kitchen or hallway. • Get your bag sorted for the morning. • Take a shower or bath. • Make a bowl of cereal. • Do some nighttime skin care. • Check in with the family or watch an episode of TV with them. • Listen to some relaxing music.
13	<p>An example bedtime routine. Starts 15-30 minutes before bedtime.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brush your teeth • Change into pj's • Write in a journal • Set your manual alarm clock • Read a book in bed (sleep-friendly book light, not a ceiling light) • Listen to a calming podcast, audio book or meditation. (you can set a timer) • Lights out (get rid of every single bit of light from your room you possibly can)
14	<p>Sleeping problems</p> <p>If...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You're having trouble falling or staying asleep at least three nights per week • You regularly wake up feeling unrested • Your daytime activities are affected by tiredness or poor mental alertness • You often need to take a nap to get through the day • Lack of sleep is affecting your physical or mental wellbeing <p>...then you really need to take action to prioritise your sleep more. If the problem then persists, in spite of your efforts, be sure to talk to a parent or trusted adult about it, and together you can decide on next steps.</p>

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Relaxing and meditating

Some ways to relax and de-stress before bed or in bed

- Guided and imagery meditation
- Breathing techniques
- Body-scan meditation
- Mindfulness meditation
- Journaling – write down your thoughts or worries

Additional teacher notes:

Address that stress.

Practicing meditation is proven to reduce anxiety, improve sleep quality and even help with insomnia. Meditation puts you in the perfect mindset to drift off to sleep. There are many videos available online or in apps to help you and also some written guides. On the topic of writing, journaling is another great way to quiet your mind by getting your thoughts and feelings down on paper. Get yourself a journal to write in and avoid all the distractions of your phone or computer.

There are lots of great websites, apps, and podcasts where you can find great meditations for teens and sleep. Look for Guided and imagery meditation, Breathing techniques, body-scan meditation, mindfulness meditation, meditation for sleep.

www.mindfulnessforteens.com and mindfulnessercises.com might be good places to start.

If there's an appetite within the group, you could devote a class or two to practicing some mindfulness for sleep and mediation for sleep exercises.

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Sleep Plan Handout

The handout contains the Sleep Hygiene Guidelines, examples of Good Sleep Routines, information on Relaxing and Meditating, and an introduction to writing a sleep plan.

We could all do with improving our sleep and, whether it's by a little or by a lot, having a Sleep Plan will help us achieve our goals. The Sleep Plan handout has a lot of the information we went through today in it and will give you some good ideas about coming up with some simple steps to help you improve your sleep.

A Sleep Plan can look like:

- Identifying a time that you'd like to be asleep by
- Communicating with your family about your sleep goals
- Taking steps towards creating a better sleep environment

<p>16...</p>	<p>A good sleep plan helps you enjoy the idea of going to bed and two tips to consider when creating a sleep plan are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make your own routine. Creating a nighttime routine will train your body and brain to know when it's time to prepare for sleep. 2. Eliminate distractions. Distractions can be anything that interferes with your ability to wind down. Anything that keeps you awake instead of aiding your sleep. They might include screen time right before bed, doing too much homework or exercise late, or not getting rid of your phone from the bedroom. If something is engaging your thoughts when you should be asleep, it's probably a distraction.
<p>17</p>	<p>One last reminder of why we would make a Sleep Plan and how important sleep is for our wellbeing.</p> <p>This slide was used in Lesson 1 and shows the percentage of pupils that had high wellbeing scores, correlated against their amount of sleep per night. The scores are derived from the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS). This is a seven-question validated scale within the Planet Youth questionnaire..</p> <p>All statistics are from the November 2022 Planet Youth Survey of 4,339 15 and 16 year-old pupils in the 91 post-primary schools and centres in Galway, Mayo and Roscommon.</p>
<p>18</p>	<p>A quote to finish on</p> <p>“The thing I prioritise above everything else is sleep, it's the best way for your body to physically and emotionally recover and get back to 100%”</p> <p>LeBron James, LA Lakers</p>
<p>19</p>	<p>Optional. This slide is the review of learning goals and there is also a 3-2-1 worksheet exercise.</p> <p>Students are invited to reflect on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three things I learned today. • Two things I found interesting. • One question I still have. <p>Quick Rating</p> <p>Even if there is only one or two minutes left in the lesson, there may still time for a quick lesson review. Ask the students to use their fingers to give the lesson a rating out of five, then ask three students to share the reason for their rating with the class. The rating might be a general rating on the overall lesson, or it may be more specific, such as asking the students to give a rating of how well they understood some concept.</p>

BEYOND THE 3-LESSON MODULE

This 3-lesson module was developed with first-year pupils and Junior Cycle pupils in mind, and with a view towards the Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines and the SPHE specification for Junior Cycle 2023. There is no reason why it can't be used for the full school population however, and then used with the incoming first years each year going forward. Perhaps something for staff to consider.

There may also be some appetite within the school, or within the year or class group, to do some additional work on the topic of sleep and there is certainly scope to do so. That could be by taking the topic to a further lesson, or perhaps by pursuing a project of some sort. Some suggestions for this are below, and of course the pupils may have some additional ideas.

- Create a sleep plan template that everyone can use.
- Spend some time on meditation techniques for sleep.
- Develop an individual sleep journal.
- Create a school awareness campaign.
- Survey fellow pupils and design an amazing infographic poster.
- Organise an information evening for parents.
- Create an educational video.
- Develop a sleep challenge for the class or year group.
- Consider doing some advocacy on the topic of sleep.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This teaching module has been under consideration since April 2021, when we received the full dataset from the 2020 Planet Youth survey. This 2020 survey showed an alarming change in sleep patterns, largely related to COVID19, but also highlighted that there was in fact a pre-existing problem related to a lack of sleep in our teens that wasn't receiving the attention it merited. Additional questions about sleep were then introduced into the 2022 Planet Youth survey questionnaire and some of this extra information has been included within the module.

I'd like to acknowledge the support and contribution of Lucy Wolfe and Shelly Rice in the development of the module, both in its content and when battling around ideas and brainstorming along the way. I'd also like to thank the students of Castlerea Community School and its staff members Stephen O'Hara, Anne-Marie Quinn and principal Eileen Ryan, for their help in developing the videos. Finally, Peter Kilmartin of Spicy Dog Media in Roscommon for the video concept and execution.

FEEDBACK AND SUGGESTIONS

This is version 1 of the module, and I'm open to suggestions for improvements, such as for additional or better content. And please let me know if you spot any errors, as I expect there are some.

These lessons may be a bit content heavy and tight on time, depending on the year group, so feel free to give feedback after you have used them in the classroom.

I hope you find the module useful to the pupils and to the school.

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