A GOOD NIGHTS SLEEP

"Sleep is the golden chain that ties health and our bodies together" Thomas Dekker (1572 – 1632)

One third of UK adults have sleep difficulties. What causes sleep problems? It's one of two things:

- A physical problem. One which needs medical attention (for instance thyroid problems) or something about where you're sleeping, like an uncomfortable airline seat!
- A psychological issue, like stress, anxiety or excitement. The brain doesn't know the difference between a happy anticipation and an anxious dread.

Why is sleep so important?

- Babies do most of their growing whilst asleep, that's how powerful it is!
- Sleep is a natural healer and boosts your immune system
- The brain uses sleep to process and make sense of our experiences
- The body produces more protein for repairing the body when you're asleep
- Sleep reduces the risk of depression and assists the memory
- Sleep balances hormones that control appetite so you're less likely to put on weight
- Sleep is a natural healer, it's when everything else stops and the body gets on with healing

TOP TEN TIPS To A Good Night's Sleep

- Start your day with daylight and exercise. Use an artificial daylight lamp if necessary.
- Physical activity - if you don't move much during the day, the brain won't realise it's rest time.
- Wait til you're tired before actually going to bed, try to go at same time and wake same time.
- Don't work, watch the news, or do anything taxing right up to bedtime, slow down, seek calm.
- Develop a 'sleep routine' – avoid anything with caffeine, alcohol or sugar, avoid liquid just before bed and have a 'make sure' visit to the loo. Don't be hungry though, eat half a banana.
- Wind down in a warm bath, use Epsom Salts which supply the body with magnesium sulphate gently through the skin and release tension. Add some lavender essential oil for relaxation.
- Use soft music, white noise or relaxation voice tapes when you get to bed.
- Have a Gratitude Journal (paper not screen) to write about (ONLY) the good things that happened in your day, it aids sleep and increases happy dreams. Add in WWW What went well!
- Alter your 'script' – Don't lie in bed thinking 'What if I don't sleep again tonight!?' Think 'I can sleep easily'. Imagine what it would be like sleeping well and waking refreshed, picture it.
- Practice techniques such as 'Alternate Nostril Breathing', gentle yoga, tai chi or stretching.
- Darkness – the brain rests better in complete darkness, make it a dark as you can and don't leave the tv or radio once you're asleep, if it's a sleep audio, set a timer to switch it off. Use an eye mask if your room is not fully dark or someone else has a light on.
- Be comfortable - Make your bed inviting. Keep warm but not too hot. Cold feet can keep you awake. Consider whether you need a new mattress, pillow or duvet. Some people sleep better with a 'weighted blanket' great nerve calmer. A cool room but a warm bed - great combo.
- Breathe long, slow and deep as you relax into bed, think about a time when you've been happily exhausted. People who use breathing techniques fall asleep 80% sooner!

My Sleep Routine

What I want to remember	How I'll put that in action
• Plan my sleep routine, what to drink, eat and how to prepare my body and mind for sleep • Focus my thoughts on the sleep I want, not the fear of lying awake • Paper boats relaxation audio • The Kumbhaka – noticing the space between breaths • Arm swings, kidney warming, legs up the wall (!) twist and stretch • Progressive Muscle Relaxation • Gratitude Journal – note only the good things about your day and WWW – What Went Well • Nadi Shodhana (alternate nostril breathing) • Remember enjoyable and relaxing memories and imagine yourself back there • Lion breath • Sleep Relaxation audios • What else?	