



BEAT THE MORNING BLUES

Thought you weren't a morning person? Think again. Tina Nielsen's advice will help even the most lethargic couch potato arrive at the office bright-eyed and raring to go

COUNT THOSE SHEEP

You spend about a third of your life asleep, but how much do you really need? The average Briton gets just six hours and 35 minutes of shuteye a night, while 33% of people only get five to six hours per night, the UK Sleep Council reported last year. This is far lower than the amount of sleep scientists say we require - between seven and nine hours. You may not feel sleepy during the day but losing just one hour can affect your ability to think properly and respond quickly. Plus it compromises your cardiovascular health, energy balance and ability to fight infections.

GET INTO A ROUTINE

Your body reacts better to a regular sleep pattern so getting into the habit of going to bed and waking up at the same time each day will help you feel more rested. This, ideally, should be during the darkest hours, as your body clock is governed by daylight - this is what makes you feel awake in the daytime and sleepy closer to night-time. Investing in blackout blinds also helps. And if you like to hit the snooze button when your alarm goes off, don't. Sleep specialist Professor Stephanie Silberman says the extra time will not get you the best quality sleep.

FIND YOUR SLEEP CYCLE

In the run-up to exams, make sure you get the required periods of deep sleep. During these periods of your sleep cycle, the brain is working hard to move memories from short-term to long-term storage, which is why sleep is so important when you're revising. Scientists at the University of Surrey's Sleep Research Centre found that people who failed to get enough sleep performed 40% worse than their peers. To learn more about regulating your sleep cycle or to programme your alarm clock to wake you up during the lightest phase of sleep, check out the Sleep Cycle app. sleepcycle.com

HIT THE GYM

Walking to work is great exercise and helps you arrive at work wide awake with a clear mind. Better still, build an early

morning workout into your pre-office routine. Only 4% of Britons exercise before work, research by Silent Night has found, but the benefits are tremendous. Researchers at Appalachian State University tracked the sleep patterns of people who walked on a treadmill three times a week, either at 7am, 1pm or 7pm. They found those who hit the treadmill at 7am had deeper sleep cycles than those who exercised at other times. Plus getting your workout out of the way gives you time to spend your evenings doing the things you really enjoy - tax compliance revision, for example...

EAT BREAKFAST

Breakfast kick-starts your metabolism, prevents you from bingeing and helps keep your weight in check - but did you know it boosts energy levels and productivity too? Yet almost a third of under 25s still skip breakfast five times a week. Those who do so lose 82 minutes of the working day due to poor concentration, according to a study released last year. The most energy-boosting breakfasts are those that combine healthy protein with wholegrain slowly-digested carbohydrates and fruit or vegetables. Ideal options include high fibre cereals, which keep your blood sugar on an even keel; eggs, which are a great source of protein to stave off hunger pangs; and nuts and wholegrain bread, which are great for slow release energy.

GO TO A RAVE

For those of you who need a more vigorous kick up the backside to get the day started, how about an, erm, morning rave? Morning Glory allows Londoners to do just that. It's an intense dance session that looks more like a vigorous club night (minus the booze) than it does a zumba class. With the motto "rave your way into the day", sessions kick off at 6.30am and attract office workers from all sectors. If you're not based in London, you can still soak up some of the spirit by watching the Morning Glory videos on YouTube. Alternatively, sign up for a British Military Fitness boot camp for a workout that will test your limits. There are 400 bootcamp classes across the UK. britmilfit.com, moringgloryville.co.uk

FIND YOUR INNER CALM

If you prefer to draw your energy in a calmer way, start the day with meditation. You don't have to go to a class - podcasts such as Headspace are downloadable anywhere in the world and will talk you through meditation sessions and the fundamentals of mindfulness, as well as helping you manage stress and anxiety. Working it into your morning routine - or your morning train journey - will ensure you arrive at exams or the office perfectly calm and centred, ready for whatever challenges are thrown at you. getsomeheadspace.com



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HATE MONDAYS? READ THIS

Lucy Whitehall, CABA's wellbeing manager, explains how to get through Monday with a smile

Everyone has experienced that sinking feeling on a Sunday evening leading into Monday morning. For most people, this occurs occasionally but for others, it persists. And for students who often study through the weekend, it can be a real issue. However, with a little planning, you can beat the Sunday evening dread:

The weary feeling associated with Monday morning could be because you don't have enough energy. Ensure that you sleep well, eat power-packed foods, do some gentle exercise such as walking and drink in moderation.

Use your Sunday evening carefully. If you spend it ironing your shirts and getting your work organised, then you are effectively starting the working week earlier than you need to. Spread these jobs out into more manageable parcels and consider doing something different, such as going for a swim.

When you reach Monday, adopt some of the mindfulness techniques that can be found on the CABA website - there is strong evidence linking increased awareness of our surroundings with improved wellbeing. And why not make Monday evening the time when you go to the cinema or head out for dinner with friends?

Don't turn to junk or comfort food to get you through the day. You will probably feel much better if you walk around a nearby park and have a light, healthy and nutritious lunch. This is especially important in winter when you might not see much daylight if you are stuck in an office all day.

And finally, it is worth spending some time determining exactly why Monday morning is so difficult for you. It could be that you are finding yourself in a work or study situation that you simply don't like, or are dealing with an unreasonable level of stress. If this is likely to continue at a level that becomes unhealthy, you need to consider taking steps to tackle these issues before they really start to impact on your wellbeing, such as sharing your concerns with someone you trust.

For more on the benefits of exercise, a good diet, sleeping well and building resilience, visit caba.org.uk