

Sleep and Mental Health

Session Plan

Session	Sleep and Mental Health
Background Information	People with mental health problems often do not sleep well and those who suffer with sleep disorders have a higher risk of developing a mental health problem such as depression. However not everyone with a mental health problem will have problems with sleep and not all those with a sleep disorder will develop a mental health problem. Developing good sleeping habits, also known as good sleep hygiene helps supports good mental health and wellbeing.
Aim	To raise awareness of sleep and links to mental health and wellbeing
Learning Outcomes	Participants will be able to 1. Dispel some of the myths surrounding sleep 2. Describe what sleep is 3. List the effects poor sleep can have on mental health and wellbeing 4. Discuss the links between sleep and mental health 5. Explore strategies on how to sleep well
Duration	• 1.5 hours
Resources	• IT • Quiz • Presentation • Flipchart/pens • Session handout • Evaluation

Learning outcomes	Participant Activity	Resources	Time
1. Dispel some of the myths surrounding sleep	• Myth Buster	Quiz	10 min
2. Describe what sleep is	• Definition	Flipchart Pens Slide	10 min
3. List the effects poor sleep can have on mental health and wellbeing	• Body Map	Flipchart Pens Slide	20 min
4. Discuss the links between sleep and mental health	• Discussion	Slide	10 min
5. Explore strategies on how to sleep well	• Sleeping well	Flipchart Pens Slide Handout	20 min
6. Looking after yourself	• Self-care	Slide	5 min
7. Reflection and session close	• Evaluation	Evaluation tool	5 min

Sleep and Mental Health

Facilitator notes

Slide	Notes	Time	Resources
1	Welcome participants and introduce yourself before offering an overview of the session. Have the title slide up and visible whilst doing this.	5 min	Slides
2	Put up the session overview slide and read out what will be covered today. Emphasise the session is not intended to make participants experts on sleep but to raise awareness of sleep, the impact poor sleep can have on mental health and wellbeing and what we can do to promote good sleep. Keeping safe Reinforce this is a basic awareness session and does not allow for detailed discussion. If you are concerned about a participant's mental health and wellbeing and feel they may be in distress, their Doctor should be their first point of contact. If you feel the person's life is in immediate danger please call 999 for assistance. Online delivery Please refer to the Healthy Minds Online Guidance if you are facilitating a session online.		
Activity	Sleep Quiz Group or Individual Activity Let's start with looking at some of the myths that surround sleep. Distribute the sleep quiz to participants. Invite participants to complete the sleep quiz, true or false. This is a good starting point and gives an insight into the participants' knowledge and attitudes to sleep. Once completed, go through each of the questions to generate discussion. Use the supporting	10min (5 min activity, 5 min feedback)	Quiz

	statements to provide the correct answers and information. Discussion point: Were there any surprises? Share that this activity helps challenge some of the myths associated with sleep.		
Activity & 3	What is sleep? Group Activity Divide the participants into groups, provide flipchart and pens. Now we are going to look at how we would define/describe sleep. Invite the groups to discuss what they think sleep is and how they would describe/define sleep. This could be words they associate with sleep or a definition. Ask them to write down the key points from their discussions. Take feedback from the each of the groups on how they defined/described sleep. Discussion point? How did they find that exercise? Often when asked, people can struggle to define what sleep is as it is something we do without giving it much thought. However, it is when we suffer from poor sleep that we often begin to take notice of the impact that this can have on our mental health and wellbeing. Sleep definition Now put up the slide with the sleep definition. This provides a simple statement of what sleep is. Go through each bullet point on the slide, using the text below to support the statements • Sleep is a natural behaviour that all animals do including humans. • It is essential to our existence, no matter how hard we try to fight it we want to sleep for at least part of every 24hours. • Sleep is very dynamic, our bodies do not shut off completely but there are lots of processes going on that are vital to our existence.	10 min (5 min activity, 5 min feedback)	Flipchart Pens Slide
Activity & 4	How does poor sleep affect our mental health and wellbeing?	15 min (10 min	Flipchart pens Slide

	Group Activity Keep participants in their groups, provide flipchart. Now we are going to look at how poor sleep can affect us. Invite the groups to draw an outline of a body on the flipchart. Ask them to discuss and write down the effects poor sleep can have on the body. They should consider the mental, physical and social wellbeing effects. Take feedback from each group, one/two examples from each. It is expected that participants may include stress, anxiety and depression as examples of how poor sleep can impact on mental health and wellbeing. Put up the slide and highlight some examples, informing the participants the list is not exhaustive. Discussion point: ask participants what do they think the purpose of this exercise is? Highlight that it demonstrates how sleep can significantly impact on our overall health and wellbeing but for the purpose of the session we will focus on the mental impact including stress, anxiety and depression in the next part.	activity, 5 min feedback)	
5 & 6	Sleep, our body clock and mental health This part of the session aims to provide some insight into why sleep can boost our mental health and wellbeing and why poor sleep can affect our mental health and wellbeing. Highlight that people with mental health problems can experience sleep difficulties and poor sleep can impact and lead to mental health problems. Reiterate that this session is only to raise awareness and give some insight into the links between sleep and mental health. It doesn't allow for detailed discussion around the complexities of sleep and mental health. Put up slide 5 Discussion point: ask the participants if anyone has heard of the circadian rhythm. Explain that the circadian rhythm is our body's 24 hour internal clock	10 min	Slides

	that lets us know when it is time to do specific functions which includes sleep. Our body clock prompts the release of two hormones which affect our sleep. These are melatonin and cortisol. Melatonin is also called the sleepy hormone. This hormone is released in response to darkness and tells the body it is time to prepare for sleep. On the flip side when it becomes light the brain sends a signal to the body to release cortisol, to wake our bodies up. This is the hormone we will look at and how this can impact on our mental health. Put up slide 6 Cortisol is also known as the stress hormone. We need cortisol to help us deal with pressure, it helps us cope. For example when we have not had enough sleep, the body will release more cortisol to keep us going. However if we continue to have a chronic release of cortisol it can impact on our sleep which can lead to sleep problems and long term mood disorders like anxiety and depression.		
7	How can sleep boost our mental health and wellbeing? So how can sleep boost our mental health and wellbeing? Our levels of cortisol are at their lowest when we are sleeping. If we establish good sleeping habits, this will ensure we have reduced levels of cortisol and in turn allow our bodies to deal with crisis, let it rest and process information. We in turn feel better physically and mentally which allows us to cope better with things that are worrying us (we often use the statement “sleep on it” when trying to make decisions or something is causing us anxiety). Depression In relation to depression, sleep deprivation affects part of the brain that controls our emotions and moods. Often people can get into a vicious cycle of sleep problems which leads to more worry and anxiety which in turn can make sleep problems worse. Hence the importance of developing good sleeping habits. Note: if delivering session to participants working with children and young people, you can highlight	5 min	Slide

	that adolescent sleep is different due to the changes that occur during puberty which can cause the body clock to shift which can impact on sleep. This means that adolescents are more likely to be active in the evening and go to bed much later.		
Activity & 8	How to sleep well Group Activity Divide the participants into groups. This part of the session will explore some strategies that can help us sleep well. Inform the participants that we should not only be thinking about bed time but be preparing throughout the day to help us sleep well at night. Have flipcharts with the headings: • How to sleep well during the day • How to sleep well in the evening and before bed time The number of flipcharts will be dependent on the number of groups you have. Provide them with one of the headed flipchart and pens. Invite the groups to write down what we can do under each of these headings to help promote good sleep. Give 5 min and then rotate each flipchart to allow each group to contribute to each of the headings. If they have nothing to add, encourage them to read what others have written. Take feedback from the groups and then put up the slide, how to sleep well and compare what the groups have highlighted. Discussion point: did this activity make them think differently about how we prepare ourselves for sleep throughout the day? Conclude that there are many things we can do throughout the day and into evening to help prepare us for a good night's sleep.	15 min (10 min activity, 5 min feedback)	Flipchart Pens Slide
Supporting Resources	Highlight that there are various resources that can provide useful information on sleep. Distribute the sleep resources handout. Inform participants this is not an exhaustive list of	5 min	Sleep resources handout

	resources. Facilitators may have information on local resources and supports they can share.		
Activity & 9	Remind the participants of the importance of looking after their own mental health and provide a self-care activity.	5 min	Slide
Session close	Thank the participants for their time and ask them to complete an evaluation.	5 min	Evaluation